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AS THE SWORDS CLASHED TOGETHER, THE LIEUTENANT DEFENDING THE LADY, THERE SHOT OUT FROM BEHIND THE BOLD POINT OF LAND A LARGE VESSEL.

OR,

The Good Ship of Ill-Omen.

A Romance of Piracy, and a Companion Story to
"The Fatal Frigate," and "The
One-Armed Buccaneer."

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MON-
TEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," "THE FLYING
YANKEE," "A CABIN BOY'S LUCK,"
"THE SEA RAIDERS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNKNOWN GAMBLER.

"SENOR MARCELLAS, your good luck is phe-
nomenal."

"Yes, for you have won my limit of betting."

"And mine."

"I have a thousand pesos you may try your
luck against in another game, Senor Marcel-
las."

The speakers were Spanish gentlemen, and
they sat about a table in a gambling salon in
Havana, while about them were gathered a

number of lookers-on, deeply interested in the games of chance which the party had been indulging in for several hours past.

The one they addressed, Robert Marcellas, was a Cuban, a man of wealth and position in Havana, and his good fortune at cards had been wonderful that night, for he had steadily won from the first game.

He was a man with a dark, stern face, refined and intelligent, and he was one of the few Cuban gentlemen whom the Spaniards were forced to treat with respect, for he had proven himself a dangerous foe in several fatal encounters, and thus made himself feared.

Those who had played to their limit withdrew after their remarks, while the one who had said that he had a thousand pesos to stake, glanced up into the face of the Cuban to see if he would accept the challenge.

In an instant he did so, with the remark:

"I cover your money, Morello, or, if you say so, we will make it two thousand."

"No; I'll risk the thousand to break your luck," said Major Morello, a Spanish officer of cavalry.

"My luck will not fail me," was the calm reply of the Cuban, and the game was begun.

Not a sound was heard throughout, other than the shuffling of the cards, and then came the words:

"I have lost."

"And I have won."

"I told you my luck could not be broken," and the Cuban smiled.

"Perhaps, señor, I may convince you to the contrary, if you will honor a stranger by playing with him."

All eyes turned upon the speaker, and the Cuban glanced quickly up at him.

He saw a tall man, under thirty, with a face that was bronzed by exposure, fearless in expression, and a look about it of one who knew his own power.

He was well dressed, in such a suit as a rich sea-captain might wear, and he certainly looked the gentleman, but whether Cuban or Spaniard no one could tell.

"Your name, please, señor?"

"Rafael Modesta, señor, and I am a sailor," was the reply, with a bow.

Roberto Marcellas arose politely and said:

"I accept your challenge, *Señor Capitán Modesta*, and if you can break my luck you are a remarkable man."

"Be seated, please, señor."

The stranger took the seat to which the Cuban motioned him, and asked pleasantly:

"Name your wager, señor."

"I am at your service, *Señor Capitán*."

"Then let it be for ten thousand pesos, to begin with."

Cool player that he was, the Cuban started at the sum named, while a murmur of amazement ran around among the interested lookers-on.

"As you please, señor," said the Cuban, after his momentary start of surprise, and the stranger took out a well-filled pocketbook and laid the amount, in Spanish notes of large denomination, down upon the table.

They were instantly covered by the Cuban, and the game was played, somewhat cautiously by the *Señor Marcellas*, and with an air of indifference by the strange sailor, whom no one seemed to know.

"I have won, *Señor Modesta*," said the Cuban, with a smile of triumph at his good fortune.

"You have, señor; but suppose we make the stake double the amount this time?"

Again the murmur of surprise from the crowd, while the Cuban said:

"I warn you, *Captain Modesta*, that my luck cannot be broken."

"I think it can, señor."

"I am called Fortune's Favorite by my friends, and often refuse to play, not wishing to win their money."

"Will you cover my wager, señor?" quietly asked the stranger.

"If you insist."

"Being a stranger to you, señor, I can only request the favor," was the courteous reply.

The Cuban bowed, and then placed his stake upon the table.

"I again win, señor," said *Señor Marcellas*, with natural triumph at his good fortune.

"As I am just back from a successful trading cruise, I can afford to double our last bet, señor, so call it forty thousand pesos this time."

The crowd looked in amazement at the stranger, for seldom was it that stakes ran half as high as the figure named.

The Cuban also seemed surprised, and looked more attentively at his antagonist; but he replied:

"I am at your service, señor; for any sum."

"Does that mean to double the forty thousand, señor?" came the cool query.

"As the *Señor Modesta* desires," answered the Cuban.

"Then I place this Spanish bank draft for fifty thousand pesos, señor, and here are thirty thousand more to make up the eighty."

Roberto Marcellas hastily wrote a few words on a slip of paper and handed it to the keeper of

the *salon*, who put his name across it, and said to the stranger:

"I accept the *Señor Marcellas's* paper for a quarter of a million pesos, *Señor Capitán*."

The stranger bowed, as though satisfied, quietly played the game through and never changed a muscle when he lost.

"Do not risk your money, señor, against my luck," the Cuban said.

The stranger made no reply, but took out several other bank drafts and then said:

"Señor, here are a hundred thousand pesos, and I am in the humor to still test your luck, but here is the stake I wish to have you place against my money."

He took up the quill pen as he spoke, dipped it into the ink-horn and wrote a few lines, which he folded up and handed to the Cuban.

The face of the latter flushed, then paled as he read what the stranger had written, and he bit his lips in an angry manner.

Then he cried:

"Do you mean this as an insult, señor?"

"Upon my honor, no!"

"What then?"

"As man to man, and in good faith."

The Cuban was silent for a moment, and all eyes watched the two, for no one knew what mysterious lines had been written upon that slip of paper which the stranger had handed to the *Señor Marcellas*.

Then, sharp and stern came the words:

"Strange as is the wager you wish me to make against your gold, *Señor Modesta*, and, stranger though you be to me, confident that my luck cannot fail me, I accept your challenge."

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERIOUS WAGER.

THE stranger bowed and smiled, when the Cuban accepted the mysterious wager he had made, while the half-hundred men, now gathered about the table, gazed at one and the other in wonder at what was taking place.

The game was begun with the same confident smile upon the part of *Señor Marcellas*, that he always wore when playing and which often disconcerted his opponents, while the mysterious sailor looked as before, wholly indifferent to consequences.

Still it could be seen that *Rafael Modesta* played with wonderful caution.

The game progressed slowly, from the quiet playing of the sailor, and the face of *Roberto Marcellas* soon lost its smile, for luck had begun to change, and the stranger was beginning to win.

Again were the cards shuffled and dealt, and amid a breathless silence the game went on, only that confident smile no longer rested upon the face of the Cuban.

"You are losing your luck, señor, and if mine continues I win," quietly said the stranger.

The Cuban made no reply.

It was evident that he was anxious, and more, he seemed fairly to suffer.

His luck had been phenomenal, and few there were who had cared to play with him.

A gambler merely for his amusement, he was not a steady frequenter of the place, and dropped into the *salon* at times when time hung heavy upon his hands.

The past three months he had been seldom seen there, for his only child, a beautiful daughter, had lately finished her education at the convent, and returning to her home had made her father's life a joyous one, and seldom was it that he cared to return to his old haunts for association.

But on that evening his daughter, the *Señorita Marcelite*, had gone to visit an old school friend, and *Señor Marcellas*, finding the home dull without her had gone to the gambling *salon* for company.

His friend she had soon driven off by his luck, and all had been surprised when the young and handsome sailor, known to no one present, had challenged him for a game.

The surprise had increased when the stranger showed such wonderful nerve in his heavy losses, and then when he proposed a wager which had without doubt moved *Señor Marcellas*.

Of course there had been times when the Cuban had lost, and heavily, but he had never seemed to care, seeming to feel that his luck would soon return.

In nine cases out of ten, however, he was the winner, and all were surprised to see the Cuban change color, his smile of confidence fade and his manner become almost nervous as the game neared the finale.

Were the stakes so enormous that they included all that *Señor Marcellas* was worth?

So people about the table asked themselves, and the more eagerly did they watch the game, because they knew not what was to be lost or won.

"I have won, *Señor Marcellas*," quietly said the stranger, as the game ended, and he leant forward calmly regarding the Cuban.

Señor Marcellas seemed dazed. His hands trembled, his face had become livid, and he seemed hardly capable of moving or understanding what the stranger had said to him.

"You seem to be deeply moved, señor, by your turn of luck."

"I will give you another chance, and upon the same terms—nay, I will place my original bet against what I have just won, all in the balance, against the wager I played for before!"

Every word was distinctly uttered, and they seemed to arouse the Cuban, who cried eagerly:

"Will you do this, señor?"

"I have so said."

"And you mean it?"

"I am a man of my word, *Señor Marcellas*."

"Then I agree," was the earnest response.

"One moment, sir," said the stranger.

"Well, señor?"

"My money is there before you, and I have no guarantee of good faith upon your part."

The Cuban's eyes flashed while he replied:

"You have my word, señor."

"You are a stranger to me, señor; but I take it your word is that of an honorable man; but will you say here, before these gentlemen, that you will pay if you lose?"

"I will do so, *Señor Modesta*, within a proper time."

"I accept that reserve, sir, making it within three months."

"Yes, sir."

"I am ready, señor, to see who is the favorite of fortune this time," and the stranger dealt the cards.

The game was played amid a dead silence, and the stranger won!

All drew a long breath, for what was it that the mysterious stranger had won which could so unnerve the impassible Cuban, *Roberto Marcellas*?

CHAPTER III.

"YOUR WAGER OR YOUR LIFE, SEÑOR!"

IT was the morning after the mysterious game played at the Havana gambling *salon*, between *Señor Roberto Marcellas*, the rich Cuban banker, and his strange opponent, the unknown sailor, who called himself *Rafael Modesta*.

The Cuban lived in handsome style, in a fashionable quarter of the city, and life was just beginning to open to him a season of enjoyment, for in the past he had had a hard struggle.

He belonged to a good old Cuban family, but his father had died and left property to his family instead of wealth.

But *Roberto Marcellas* had worked his way up to a lucrative position while yet a young man, and he had married a handsome Cuban girl who was an heiress, and whom he loved for her worth alone, and not her money.

He had been forced to fight several duels, with rivals, to win her; but, a superb swordsman, he had been the victor.

His wife had died a few years after their marriage, leaving him one child, a beautiful little daughter.

This little girl, *Marcelite*, had been given to the care of the nuns to educate and rear, and it was upon her return home that the happiness of the stern man began.

These things did *Roberto Marcellas* con over as he paced the library the morning after his game at the *salon*.

He was very pale, and sleep had not visited him during the night.

Fortunately his daughter was absent, for a couple of days, visiting friends, so did not know what her father suffered, for suffer he did.

A servant entering informed him that a gentleman had called to see him.

"His name?"

"*Señor Capitán Modesta*."

"Ah, Heaven have mercy! I feared it," groaned the man, as the servant departed to show the visitor in.

"Good-morning, *Señor Marcellas*. I hope I find you in the enjoyment of perfect happiness this morning," said the sailor in his quiet way.

"You find me a very wretched man, *Señor Capitán*."

"Ah! why so, pray?"

"That I was such a fool to stake on a game of cards my happiness and that of my only child," was the rejoinder.

"You seemed to feel that your luck was unbreakable, señor, and I simply proved that it was not."

"But the accursed wager I made."

"Your daughter's hand?"

"Yes."

"I consider that an angelic wager, señor."

"You understand me, sir. I say that it was accursed in me to make such a wager."

"Ah! I agree with you there; but still you did so."

"And, by the high Heaven above, *Señor Modesta*, I shall not keep it," cried the Cuban, savagely.

The sailor laughed lightly.

"You do not believe me?"

"No, for you boasted last night that you were a man of your word."

"Take my fortune, sir, and release me from that wager?"

"No; for I have a fortune."

"You do not know my daughter, even."
"I have seen her, senior, and to see the Senorita Marcelite, is to love her."
The Cuban groaned in his agony of spirit.
"She has never seen you, sir."
"Perhaps, yes, perhaps, no."
"Who are you, anyhow?"
"A sailor."
"That means much, it means nothing."
"According to how you understand it."
"I understand it that you are simply a sailor?"

"I am the captain of a vessel which I own, senior, and I cruise from sea to sea, getting what cargoes I can, and disposing of them to the best of advantage."

"I have made money by it, and can match your fortune to-day."

"I am a gentleman born, a Cuban, and seeing your daughter, loved her. If she becomes my wife I am more than a happy man. If not, I am wretched."

"I staked my fortune against her hand, and I won. I gave you another chance, yet still I won, and I shall demand my wager—shall ask to be presented to your daughter, and beg from her her love."

"And I refuse, sir, be you rich or poor, Cuban or Spaniard, gentleman or mongrel," Senor Marcellas retorted.

"And I shall post you as a liar, for breaking your word, and a thief for robbing me of what I won from you!" was the cool response of the sailor.

Senor Marcellas was livid with rage. He half-started toward the stranger, but checking himself hissed:

"These threats to me, sir?"
"Yes, for you refuse my demand. It shall be your wager, or your life, senior!" said the mysterious sailor, calmly.

"Do you mean that you dare face me in the duello?"

"I do, senior!"
"Then so it shall be, sir. Your address, please, that my friend may find you."

The sailor handed out a card, wrote on it an address and departed.

The address was given on shipboard, and there the friend of Senor Marcellas found him seated in his cabin, chatting with a visitor in the uniform of a captain in the Spanish Army.

The Cuban had sent to him a Spanish naval captain, and the sailor greeted him pleasantly, and set wine before him.

The "affair of honor" was quickly arranged, and the naval officer retired to the home of the Cuban.

"Well, Captain Valdez?" eagerly asked the Cuban.

"I found him on board his vessel, as trim a schooner as I ever saw, and which only needs the guns and a large crew to make her a pirate."

"Maybe he is one."
"Oh, no, he is a trader, I guess, as he says, for Captain Durad of the cavalry was his guest, and is to be his second."

"Ah! did you ask Durad about him?"

"No. I had not the opportunity."

"Well, what are the arrangements?"

"To fight at sunset to-day, outside of the town, at a point you have fought on before," was the significant reply.

"Weapons?"

"Swords."

"Good! I'll run him through the heart and thus end his demand on me," was the savage response of the Cuban.

Several hours after, accompanied by Captain Valdez and his surgeon, Senor Marcellas drove in his *volante* to the rendezvous.

The sailor and his cavalry friend were already there, having gone by boat from his schooner, and the two parties politely saluted each other.

Then the weapons were uncased, measured, and the duelists took their stands, the surgeon having opened his box of ominous-looking instruments ready for use, though the Cuban had said to him:

"I will not need your services, senior, and when I finish with yonder fellow he will be beyond them."

All present, except the sailor, knew the Cuban's skill as a swordsman, and Captain Durad appeared a trifle anxious for his friend.

But the young sailor seemed indifferent, and when the blades crossed, Senor Marcellas showed visibly that he had met a surprise, for his opponent was as skilled with weapons as with cards.

The others saw this too, and the faces of Captain Valdez and his surgeon became anxious as they saw that the sailor was pressing their friend hard, and meant to kill him.

In vain did Senor Marcellas change from the offensive to the defensive, when he saw that he had to fight for his life, for the mysterious seaman pressed him back, step by step, beat down his guard and drove his keen blade through his body.

Drawing it forth, his victim sunk into the arms of Captain Valdez, and coolly wiping the blade, after a glance at the man he had given his death-wound, he raised his cap, and taking the arm of Captain Durad, walked away to his boat.

Upon reaching the boat, Captain Durad stopped and said:

"Here we part, Captain Modesta, for I wish to return and see if I can aid Senor Marcellas and the others, for they are my friends."

"You did me a good service the other night, when those drunken soldiers attacked me, and I was glad to return it by serving you to-day."

"As you please, senior, and for what you have done I thank you."

Captain Modesta turned as he spoke, and continued on to his boat, while Captain Durad returned to the little group near the *volante*.

"Ah, Durad, he has just breathed his last; but, who is that devil's own friend of yours?" cried Captain Valdez.

"I know only that he says his name is Rafael Modesta, and that he is captain of a West Indian trader."

"He saved my life some nights since, from a gang of drunken soldiers who attacked me, and to-day called at my quarters and asked me to serve him."

"He is a superb swordsman, and more I cannot tell you; but Heaven pity poor Senorita Marcellas," said the young cavalry soldier, as the body was placed in the *volante* to be sent home.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIDE OF A BUCCANEER.

"MARCELITE, I have deceived you!"

The one who uttered the words stood upon the deck of a beautiful armed schooner, which was gliding swiftly over the moonlit waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and gradually dropping the island of Cuba out of sight astern, as the distance increased.

The one to whom he addressed the startling words was a woman, young, beautiful, and who was clinging to the arm of the speaker with all the confidence of a pure love.

There was no flag flying at the peak, but the crew scattered about wore a sea uniform, and several officers were grouped together amidships laughing and talking, the moonlight glittering upon the gold lace that ornamented their caps and jackets.

"You have deceived me, Vival?" asked the woman, raising her beautiful eyes to the man upon whose arm she leant, and there was doubt in her tone, a look in her face that she could not believe his words.

"Yes, Marcelite, I am not all that you have believed me to be."

"What are you that I have not thought you, Vival?"

"Do you remember our first meeting?"

"Ah, yes, at the masked ball in the Governor-General's palace in Havana—can I ever forget it, Vival?"

"Do you recall that I left at the hour when the masks were to be removed?"

"Yes, you said that you were compelled to go, but you unmasked before me."

"I did, for you did not know me, Marcelite."

"I know you now; but I have often thought of our meeting, when I dropped my diamond bracelet, and you returned it to me, asking that you might clasp it upon my arm, and I allowed you to do so. Then you grew bold, and asked me to take your arm in a promenade, and I consented, and thus we became friends, for I unmasked for you, as you did for me, and from that moment I loved you."

"I had loved you before, Marcelite, for I had seen you several times upon the balcony of your father's house, and I knew his portly form, in spite of a mask, when he entered, and I felt that it was you that was with him."

"The bracelet I saw you drop, and it gave me an excuse to join you."

"Then, when your father died, and you went to live in your bachelor uncle's home, back yonder on the coast, I sought you there, because I loved you."

"He knew me as a Spanish naval officer, and welcomed me, for he cared little for the world outside of his own home, and when I asked your hand of him, he gave it to me, and I am happy in having you now with me as my bride."

"Still, I have deceived you, Marcelite."

Even in the moonlight he saw a look of incredulity pass over her face, while she said, earnestly:

"I believe you to be all that is noble, Vival."

He was silent an instant and then he said in a low tone:

"You have few kindred ties, Marcelite—no one that you care for, I believe?"

"Only my uncle, who was kind to me, after my father's death, you know. I went to the convent from my home, Vival, and I had just entered society, when father was killed in that fearful duel I have told you of, and I then after his death went to my uncle, hoping he would avenge his brother."

"But, poor, easy-going soul that he is, he would do nothing, and I vowed to be avenged some day myself, upon the murderer of my poor father, who fell through his love for me, for I have told you of his gambling my hand against a fortune and then fighting to save me."

"Then you came to me, in my new home yonder by the sea, Vival, and I forgot all about re-

venge. I lived only for love, and you are all that I have, all that I care for in the wide world."

As she spoke she put her hands upon his shoulders and gazed up into his face with perfect love and confidence.

He was a handsome man, a Cuban by birth, and with the dark hair and eyes of his race. His form was elegant, yet wiry in build and denoted strength above the average, which, in his gorgeous uniform he certainly looked the man to win a young girl's admiration and love.

"And yet, Marcelite, I have deceived you!" again came those same ominous words.

She did not shrink from him, though she could but believe his words had some deep, hidden meaning. Her love was too idolatrous in its intensity, her trust too great in the object of that love, for her to give him up, because he had deceived her in some way.

"Tell me, Vival, what you have done, that I may forgive you and bury the past, whatever it be."

He half turned his face away at her words, and shuddered slightly. Then he said slowly: "Marcelite, suppose I was to tell you that I am other than I seem—that I am not, as you, and your uncle believe me, a Spanish naval officer, but something else."

"You speak Spanish as a native, Vival; but, whatever your nationality I can but love you."

"I told you, when we met at that hall that I was a naval officer, and I have so led you to believe since."

"You introduced me to your uncle as Captain Vival Murel, of the Spanish Navy, and he, though a Cuban and not particularly in love with Spaniards, received me with kindness and hospitality."

"It was because you were my intended husband, Vival, as I had told him you were."

"I had told him that one day when out driving, some weeks after my father's death, I went to his grave, to bid it farewell, as I was to leave Havana and come to his home to live."

"I told him that while there, weeping over my dear, dead father, that you had appeared, you whom I had once seen at the convent, again at the masked ball, and several times after in my horseback rides about the town."

"I told him that there, above my father's grave, you had told me of your love and vowed by the ashes of the dead at our feet to make my life one of happiness."

"Knowing this, and how dearly I loved you, my uncle welcomed you, and, when you came yesterday, according to your promise, to ask me to be your wife, he gave his consent, and now, Vival, we are united until death parts us."

"Unless you reverse that vow, Marcelite?"

"What do you mean, Vival?"

"I told you that I was not a Spanish officer, Marcelite."

"What are you then?"

"A Cuban."

"I am glad to hear that, for I am a Cuban, you know."

"And I hate Spain and Spaniards."

"Most Cubans do!"

"But, I was in the navy of Spain, Marcelite, as a midshipman, and I was insulted by Spaniards because I was a Cuban. At last, goaded on by insults I hit back, and I hit hard and deadly, and I had to leave my ship, or go up to the yard-arm."

"I sprung into the sea—reached the shore after a desperate struggle for life, and from that day I vowed vengeance against Spain."

"I made my way back to the West Indies, for it was on the Spanish coast that I escaped, and, receiving what money I could I fitted out a small craft and began my war against the Spanish flag."

"I prospered, Marcelite, for I own this fine armed vessel now; I have an island rendezvous all my own, among the Bahamas, and there are those upon this schooner, and in that isle, who obey my bidding alone, and sail under the flag I fly above this deck."

"Why, Vival, do you own no nation's flag?" she asked in surprise.

"None."

"Does that not make you an outlaw, Vival?"

"In the eyes of Spain, yes, Marcelite, and Spain is my foe. I have entered her ports in disguise; I have taken my vessel into Havana, anchored her under the guns of El Moro, and she has been looked upon as an honest trader, for my battery and extra men have been in hiding in the hold."

"But, you shall see the flag I fly, Marcelite, and, if you wish to give me up, to return to the guardianship of your uncle, I shall point the bow of my vessel again toward the land, and leave you in safety in his care."

"No, no, Vival! I will remain with you," and she clung to his arm.

"Wait until you see my flag, Marcelite."

His voice startled his officers and crew as it rung out:

"Ho, there!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" and an officer came quickly aft to where the young captain and his bride stood.

"Run my colors up to the peak, Senor Nanon Barsco."

"Ay, ay, senior."

A minute more and a flag fluttered out upon the breeze.

It was a black field and had a gauntlet-gloved hand in crimson, clasping a cutlass of gold.

"Oh, Vival! it is the flag of a—a—"

"Speak out, Marcelite."

"A buccaneer!" she whispered.

"It is the flag that I sail under, Marcelite—shall I put about for your uncle's home?"

"No, Vival, my destiny is indelibly linked with yours, for I am your wife," was the low but firm response of the beautiful girl, over whose form there swept a shudder as she uttered the words.

CHAPTER V.

A PIRATE'S GOOD DEED.

THE winds whistled through the streets of New Orleans, and the driving rain beat stingingly into the faces of those who were forced to face the fury of the storm.

The night was dark, and the streets were like rivulets as the waters rushed through them.

And out in the streets, wandering along with aimless steps, as though unheeding the pelting rain, was a man who wore no cloak to protect him from the cold and wet.

His way lay toward the river, and as he walked along his eyes would fall upon the lights in the windows of pleasant homes, which seemed but to make him more wretched, for he groaned forth from between his shut teeth:

"There is no home for me."

Suddenly he stopped, and raising his hand, said earnestly:

"Yes, there is a home for me."

"It is yonder, beneath the depths of yonder rolling river."

"I will go to my home—the home that awaits all those whose burdens of life are more than they can bear."

He hastened on now with quick, firm tread, and leaving the houses behind him, crossed the broad level and stopped at last upon the river-bank.

Above him, along the shore, were a number of vessels, and out in the stream, at anchor, were others, their lights shining but dimly through the darkness and the rain.

The man stood upon the bank, looking down unmoved into the black, rushing river, and unheeding the pitiless rain that beat upon him.

At last he said:

"Yes, I am going home—home to my grave."

"Ah, me! how I have suffered for the wild life I led in the dear old home."

"I was wild, wayward, and, fear of the galls caused me to fly."

"Here I am to-night, far from those dear to me, with no friend near—not one to stretch forth a hand to help or save me."

"I am hungry, ragged and sick."

"Were I well, I could get work on board some of these vessels."

"But I am not fit to work, and so I must die."

"Better that the end be sudden, than that I linger on in sorrow and suffering a few more days."

"May God forgive me! May He bless those dear to me!"

As he spoke he plunged into the river, and sunk from sight.

"Way 'nough! All eyes open, for a man jumped from yonder bank!"

The words came from a boat that was approaching the shore.

In the darkness and the rain the suicide had not observed it, nor had he been seen by those in the boat until he sprang into the river.

"There he rises! Steady! I have him!"

The one who had before spoken grasped the form of the suicide as he spoke, for he had risen within reach of his arm.

He was at once drawn into the boat, limp, lifeless almost, and barely could say:

"Throw me back into the river—let me die!"

Then he became unconscious.

"Poor fellow, I believe he is starving."

"Why, he has a high fever, and his pulse beats with frightful rapidity."

"Pull ashore, and four of you men help me bear him to Pere Jacques's Inn."

The boat touched the shore soon after, and the men, forming a barrow with their oars, placed the limp form upon it and rapidly followed the one who appeared to be leader, and who had ordered his coxswain to draw off from the bank and anchor until his return.

Pere Jacques's Inn was a sailors' tavern, kept by an old Frenchman, and, as though acquainted well with the place, the leader took his party through the yard to a rear door, at which he gave a peculiar knock.

It was opened by Pere Jacques himself, who held a lantern in his hand, and recognizing his visitor cried in Spanish, which he spoke well:

"Welcome captain, welcome, and come in out of this wicked night."

"Thank you, Pere Jacques, I'll gladly do so; but first take this man to a room, get him dry clothes and send for a doctor for him."

"Then give my men some grog all round and let them go back to their boat, while I have an hour's talk with you."

"All shall be as you say, captain; but have

you turned good Samaritan?" he added, as he saw the ragged form on the litter.

"Strange to say I have in this case."

"I saw the fellow jump into the river, doubtless to take his own life, and, having thwarted him he may thank me some day, yes and be useful to me too," and the one addressed as captain laughed lightly, as Pere Jacques halted at a room into which the sailors bore the unconscious man.

A doctor was at once sent for, dry clothes were put upon the poor wretch, and the seamen, after their grog had been disposed of, returned to their boat.

The doctor pronounced the patient suffering from a high fever, and said that the chances of recovery were against him.

He was a young man, with an exceedingly attractive face and the appearance of having been reared a gentleman.

But his face was haggard and pinched with suffering now.

"I like the fellow's face—it is one in a thousand, so Pere Jacques, get a good nurse, give him your best room, and save him, for I'll pay all bills, do you hear?"

"I will do your bidding, captain, now I know where the money comes from; but should he die?" said the cautious Frenchman.

"Bury him, and I'll pay expenses."

"Certainly, captain; but come, let us leave him to the doctor and his nurse, while we have a talk, for I have news."

"Good!" said the man whom the Frenchman called captain, and he followed the host to a pleasant room, where a bottle of wine and lunch was at once brought by a little grisette.

The "captain" was none other than Vival Murel, the Cuban Corsair, and the cruel man who, as Rafael Modesta, had gambled with Senor Roberto Marcelas for his daughter's hand, and then killed him because he would not keep to his word, and in the end had married Marcelite, the daughter of the one whom he had placed in his grave.

But little did poor Marcelite dream that the hand that she had placed her own in so confidently, had held the sword that pierced her father's heart.

CHAPTER VI.

STRANGELY MET.

"THAT shot has settled him, Gunner Harold!"

The scene has changed from New Orleans to the Gulf, some months after the stormy night when the intended suicide had been carried to the tavern of Pere Jacques, suffering with a high fever, which had caused his heated brain to long for rest in death.

A trim little schooner has been speeding over the blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico, chased by a fleet brig-of-war, flying the English flag, for at the time of which I write the muttering tempest of war was heard in our land, threatening to break out between the American colonies and the mother country.

The schooner was firing upon the brig from her stern guns, and her captain had the pluck to boldly show his colors, which were none other than a black field with a crimson hand grasping a gold cutlass—the flag of a sea outlaw, and which was recognized as floating above the deck of the Cuban Corsair, known in the Gulf as Captain Cutlass.

The schooner had been gaining upon the brig, and there was the prospect of her escaping, for night was not far away, and the corsair hugged the shore as close as possible, hoping to dart into some secret lagoon or inlet after dark, and thus escape, for his pursuer's deeper keel caused him to keep further out to sea.

As it became evident to those on board the brig that the schooner must escape, a sailor advanced to where the captain stood, and saluting politely, said:

"Will you permit me, sir, to fire the bow pivot a few times, for I believe I can hit the schooner and cut away a mast."

"By all means, Harold; and if you do, I'll make you gunner of the piece," was the reply.

The young sailor was the one who had sprang into the Mississippi, that night of storm at New Orleans, but he was greatly changed since then, and in his sailor garb was certainly a handsome, dashing-looking man.

He walked forward to the gun, and after it had been loaded, coolly took aim at the schooner, now almost out of range.

Then the piece belched forth its iron shot, and all eyes anxiously watched the result.

A cheer went up from the British crew as the shot was seen to have been a line one, cutting through the mainsail of the pirate.

Again the young gunner fired, and the shot tore along the deck of the schooner, evidently doing damage to crew and vessel.

A third shot was fired with the same deliberate aim, and a wild cheer broke from the brig's men, for it had cut away the mainmast, bringing it down with its vast spread of canvas.

It was this shot which had caused the British captain to say:

"That shot has settled him, Gunner Harold!"

The pirates were thrown into the utmost confusion, for their vessel broached to, with the wreckage hanging over the side, and the brig

ran rapidly down upon the schooner, firing as she did so.

The pirates had attempted to take to their boats, but a broadside from the brig shattered them, and so they determined to fight.

"Boarders ahoy!" shouted the brig's commander, and after receiving a severe fire from the schooner, the British vessel ran alongside of the pirate.

The young gunner, Harold, was the first upon the deck of the schooner, and the fight that followed was a fierce one, but ended in the pirates being driven before the British tars and forced to surrender.

"Put that man in irons, Gunner Harold!" cried the British commander, pointing to the pirate chief, who had just thrown his sword at the feet of the young captain.

Gunner Harold stepped forward to obey, and as the pirate held forth his hands he started, his face flushed and paled, and for a moment he hesitated in carrying out the order.

The eyes of the pirate captain were upon him, and the recognition was mutual.

The pirate knew at a glance the young man whom he had dragged from the Mississippi River that night, and had cared for at Pere Jacques's until he was well, but who, in an interview held with him, had resisted his temptations to go with him as an officer of his outlaw craft.

The gunner recognized the corsair captain as the one who had saved him from death, befriended him during his long illness, paid all of his bills for him, and failing to get him to turn buccaneer, had left with Pere Jacques a handsome little sum for him when he got well and departed, trusting to his honor not to betray those who had been his friends.

Thus they had parted and the young sailor, Harold, had shipped on board the British brig-of-war as seaman, and thus they had met again most strangely.

After his momentary hesitation, and without a word to the pirate, Gunner Harold had put the irons on the hands of Captain Cutlass, the Cuban Corsair, and led him down below, to chain him to the deck, for so cruel had been the career of the outlaw chief that the British commander was determined to show him no kindness in his treatment of him, and ordered that he should be allowed no more privileges than were his merciless crew.

CHAPTER VII.

RIGHT OR WRONG.

AFTER her capture of the pirate schooner, the British brig took her prize in tow and ran in-shore to find a safe anchorage, where repairs could be made, preparatory to sailing for New Orleans.

There was considerable confusion on board, for many had been killed and wounded on both sides, and the crew were considerably worn out, for they had been battling with a storm for several days, and then had entered upon the long chase of the schooner, which had been a great strain upon officers and men alike.

The pirates had been put in double irons below deck, where a single lantern gave a dim, dismal light.

The chief had been placed by the young gunner, slightly apart from his men, and lay back upon a coil of rope silent, and yet not asleep, for his dark eyes were watching all that took place about him and his ears were filled with the moans of the wounded.

Presently a form approached him, carrying a bundle, and throwing it down by the side of him he said:

"You can make yourself more comfortable with these, sir."

He bent over him an instant and then walked away.

Soon after the same form approached, and the chief spoke to him.

He halted, stooped over a moment, and then passed on.

It was not very long before he came a third time, and he carried a battle lantern, which he flashed upon each ironed prisoner.

He was making an inspection to see that all were right for the night, for until they got out to sea, no comforts could be allowed the pirate crew.

Getting near the outlaw chief the man set the lantern down and walked away a few paces to where several of the pirates were grouped together.

These he made move apart, and yet he was delayed sufficiently long for Captain Cutlass to take advantage of the near presence of the lantern to read what was written upon a strip of paper, though no one saw him do so.

What he read there was as follows:

"The bundle contains a sailor's suit and tarpaulin. When eight bells have struck rig up in it and come on deck, for I will unlock your irons on my last tour of inspection. The brig lies a mile from the shore. I can do no more for you, and it is a struggle in my mind between right and wrong, whether to free you now that you may again be a curse upon the sea. If you escape, and no one in the confusion and darkness will suspect you, the debt between us is repaid."

The eyes of the pirate lighted up as he read

this, and he lay back upon the ropes in seeming contentment.

The gunner then came near and continued his inspection.

In bending over the pirate chief he deftly freed him of his irons, and passed on, and soon after the prisoners were left again to their bitter meditations.

As though making himself comfortable, the pirate chief moved about for a while, and then lay still; but in that time he had drawn the sailor's suit on over his own, and then lay as silent as though he were dead.

On the deck above, the shuffling of feet and the sound of voices were heard, but below there was not a sound, other than the clanking of the chains of the prisoners, as some restless sleeper turned over, or the snoring of one who could slumber in spite of the dread fear of the gallows before him.

At last eight bells rung out, and the pirate chief raised his head and peered about him.

The men seemed to be all asleep, and the lantern burned so dimly, that there was little light to show his movements.

Softly he arose and soon glided away toward the open hatch forward.

Not a movement was heard, not a man spoke, so he was evidently unnoticed.

If his own men had been conscious of what he was doing, he did not fear betrayal from them, knowing that they would suspect he would find some means to save them, if sure he was free.

As the pirates were all in irons, no guard was kept below decks, for the brig's crew were all hard at work on repairing the damages to the schooner, and looking after the dead and wounded.

Up from the hold glided the pirate, and he glanced quickly about him as his head peered over the sides of the hatchway.

There was no one near him, not a man forward, but there were a number amidships and aft.

He did not take time to see where the land was, or how the vessels lay, but cautiously stepped upon deck and walked toward the bow.

Unseen, or if seen, unsuspected, he slipped over the bows and lowered himself into the water.

Then he swam rapidly but noiselessly away.

Getting some distance out upon the dark waters he took his bearings, saw where the brig and schooner lay, and noted the dark forest-clad shores in the distance.

"It is a long swim, but to reach it is life, to fail is death in these dark waters and to remain on yonder craft is to die at the yard-arm."

"That young sailor has indeed paid the debt he owed me, by setting me free, and it was cleverly done, too, and no one will suspect him."

"Now for the fight for life," and weighted down as he was with his clothes, Captain Cutlass started for the distant shore, swimming with a long, steady stroke, which would carry him there within the hour, if his strength did not fail him.

If it did, there was no hope for him. But then it was better to drown than hang, was the thought that was constantly before his mind as he struggled manfully on to save the life which had been but a curse to him, so inhuman had he been toward his fellow-man in his mad fight for gold.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHASE.

NEARLY a year had passed since the capture of the pirate vessel by the brig-of-war, and that the Cuban Corsair, Captain Cutlass, had not been drowned in his long swim that night, had been proven by the fact that he was again upon the deck of another schooner over which floated his sable flag with its red hand gold cutlass.

The escape of the pirate from on board the brig had cast no suspicion upon any of the British crew, for it was believed that he had, from the small size of his hands, slipped the irons over them, and, reaching the deck unnoticed, had jumped into the water.

It was not believed that he could have the nerve, and the honest tars thought that he simply preferred to die by drowning than at the yard-arm, and so had gone overboard.

As for the young sailor, Gunner Harold, he kept his own counsel and tried to feel that he had done his duty in releasing a man who had saved his life and otherwise befriended him.

When the brig reached port a vessel was found there which had come in under the care of its crew, its captain having died and the mate losing his life by being swept overboard in a storm.

The crew of the vessel had asked the commander of the brig to give them a commandor to take the craft to its destination, and he had appointed the young gunner, who had proved himself a splendid seaman during the time he had been under his command.

"You must keep a bright lookout for that arch rascal, Captain Cutlass, Harold, for he did not die as we hoped, but is again afloat," the brig's captain had said to the young sailor as he left the vessel-of-war to take command of the merchant brig.

The merchantman again set sail, and the new

skipper soon proved to the crew that he understood his duties thoroughly.

But the brig, though a good sailer, had not her full crew, and so Harold did not keep her under full sail, not wishing to work his men too hard.

One day, when speeding along at a ten-knot pace, the lookout's voice rung out with:

"Sail ho!"

"I see her," said Harold, who had his glass to his eye regarding the vessel when the lookout hailed, for he knew he was in a dangerous locality for buccaneers, being then in the vicinity of the Bahamas, the brig's destination being the Bermudas.

Harold made out the stranger to be a schooner, and the rake of the topmasts visible above the horizon convinced him that it would be well to give him a wide berth.

But the schooner was on a course that must bring her nearer to the brig, and, as the day drew near its close, it became evident that the stranger was an armed craft, and meant to get a closer look at the merchantman.

Crowding on all sail, Harold started in flight, and the brig sped swiftly along.

But the schooner, under a mass of canvas, came flying after her, and soon showed that she was gaining rapidly.

With his half a dozen men, Harold knew that resistance was impossible, and all he hoped to do was to reach the nearest port before he could be overhauled.

All through the night the chase continued, both vessels under full sail, and when the dawn began to break, the schooner opened fire.

But still Harold held on, for port was but ten leagues away, and he hoped to yet escape, unless his vessel was seriously crippled.

He saw that he could, at the rate both vessels were then sailing, run in half a mile ahead of the schooner, unless an unlucky shot should bring him to, and so he told his men he intended to take the chances of the fire of the enemy.

With the rise of the sun the schooner was seen to set the sable flag, and the fire upon the brig became hotter and hotter.

The iron shots cut through the sails, splintered the spars, tore along the decks and laid two of the crew dead at the feet of the young commander.

But still he held on.

At last another of the men was cut down, and those remaining called out for the captain to surrender.

"Surrender to a pirate means death," was the stern reply.

"He might spare us, sir," said the man, who acted as mate.

"I think the chances are against his doing so, lads, while we can hold on as long as the brig is not seriously crippled."

"See, port is not two leagues away and we will soon be safe, for he will not dare chase us nearer than a couple of miles, as there must be a vessel-of-war there that will run out to our aid."

Thus urged the young skipper, and the men said no more until the helmsman was killed at his post.

Instantly Harold sprung to take his place, but the crew ran forward in fright and went down into the hold.

Then was presented the strange spectacle of the gallant young sailor standing alone upon his vessel's deck, while the pirate schooner came flying along in chase, sending a shower of iron upon the brig.

Seeing that the daring skipper of the brig could not be intimidated by his firing, and would escape him, unless he crippled him, and brought him to, the pirate luffed sharply and poured a broadside upon the flying vessel.

The effect was disastrous, for the brig had her foremast cut away and became at once an unmanageable wreck upon the waters.

The two men below came rushing upon deck, feeling that all was over, and half an hour after the pirate schooner ran alongside of the brig and the outlaw chief and his merciless followers sprung on board with wild cheers of triumph.

CHAPTER IX.

LIFE OR DEATH.

So infuriated was the pirate captain, at the resistance he had met, to his demand for the brig to come to, and the daring of the young skipper bringing his vessel so near a dangerous port, for already he saw a war-vessel under sail coming out, that he gave his men orders to cut down all who were found upon the prize.

The young skipper heard the order, and with cutlass in one hand and a pistol in the other, for he had brought the weapons on deck with him, fearing the crew might try to force him to surrender, he met the onslaught of the pirate crew, his two men trying also to beat them back with capstan bars.

The rush was a fearful one, and the two men went down before it; but Harold sprung nimbly back, fired in the face of the pirates, bringing one to the deck, and then stood at bay with his cutlass ready to meet any one who attacked him.

"Hold there!"

The order was given just in time, for the pi-

rates were about to rush upon the brave sailor and cut him down.

It came from the lips of the pirate chief.

A moment more and he confronted the one who had tried so hard to have the vessel intrusted to his care.

"We have met before, senior, so lower your cutlass, please," said the pirate.

"Yes, Captain Cutlass, we have met before, but I will not submit now to die without a fight for life," was the bold reply.

"Do you believe that I would let my men kill you?"

"I know not what you would do."

"You saved me from the gallows."

"Yes, and you saved my life, so we are quits."

"Lower your cutlass, for I will not harm you, Senior Harold."

The young man did as he was directed, and then the pirate asked:

"Where are the rest of your crew?"

"They are all here, senior, or rather their bodies are, for I was merely carrying this vessel to her destination, she having lost her officers."

"Well, I need a lieutenant, and you will be just the man. But what is your cargo?"

"General merchandise."

"I must get what I can of it, and then set the brig on fire, for that is a cruiser coming yonder and I have no time to lose," and the Cuban Corsair pointed towards the vessel coming out of the seaport a league and a half distant and crowding on all sail.

The crew of the pirate quickly threw what they could of the brig's cargo upon the decks of the schooner, then the prize was set on fire, and Captain Cutlass sped away in flight, the British sloop-of-war now within range and opening fire hotly upon him from her bow guns.

But the schooner proved to be a fleet sailer, and quickly dropped the war-vessel astern without suffering any damage from her fire.

Standing on deck, with his prisoner by his side, Captain Cutlass watched the sailing of his vessel until he saw there was no danger from the cruiser, and then he said:

"Senior Harold, come into my cabin with me, please."

Harold cast a sad look toward the still burning brig, and an expression of regret crossed his fine face as he saw that the cruiser would be unable to catch the pirate schooner, which was a handsome little craft, well-armed and manned with three-score men of a dozen different nationalities.

Entering the cabin, he found it furnished most luxuriously, and about it were scattered a number of souvenirs of captured vessels.

"Be seated, senior," the Cuban Corsair said, quietly, and he threw himself upon a lounge as he spoke.

Harold obeyed in silence, and for some minutes not a word was said.

Then the pirate remarked:

"Senior Harold, when I dragged you out of the Mississippi River, that stormy night a year ago, it was your intention to take your life, for the world had gone hard with you, it seems."

"I was poor, starving, for I had not any money, and, delirious with fever, I did that which I would not have done, had I been in health."

"Very true, I grant that; but fortune had ill-treated you, nevertheless."

"I was destitute, yes, but for that I had only myself to blame," he said, bitterly.

"I told you in New Orleans, when you recovered, that I was a free rover, and I asked you to become my first luff, but you refused me then."

"Yes, Captain Cutlass, I had no wish to become an outlaw."

"Well, when we met again, you were but a warrant officer on board a British cruiser, and now, at this meeting, you were simply acting skipper of a merchant trading brig, which berth, as I understood you, was to end when you reached port."

"Unless the agents wished me to still keep command of the brig."

"And if not, were you to return to the brig-of-war?"

"No, I had my discharge from her, and had not thought what I should do."

"Well, your brig is burned, so ill-fortune still dogs you; but I give you a chance now with me."

"I do not care to turn pirate, Captain Cutlass."

"I need a good officer, senior, and you are just the man."

"I did you a favor, which I grant you nobly returned, and at risk to yourself, I admit; but you found out some dangerous secrets about me and my New Orleans agent, Pere Jacques, and though I trusted you then, since I know you have liquidated your debt of gratitude to me and are given to shipping on British vessels-of-war, I do not care to again trust my safety, and that of my vessel and crew, in your hands."

"I escaped, as you planned for me, and I went to my rendezvous and fitted out this craft, receiving another crew; but I do not wish to run the risk of losing my vessel again, and so I shall make you an offer."

"Well, senior?"

"You shall be my first officer, share well in

our booty and be next to myself in all things, if you will do so."

"If I refuse?"

The pirate was silent for a moment, and then he said:

"Senor Harold, you were well born, and have been reared in refinement.

"Some secret, which you wish not to make known has made a wanderer of you.

"I ask not what it is, but I do ask that you accept my offer and become my lieutenant."

"And if I refuse, senor?"

"Well, though I should regret to do so, I would have you put to death."

"Do you mean this, senor?"

"I am not one to use idle threats, senor, as you will say, if you know me well."

"Then it is death or dishonor that I am to choose between?"

"It is life or death, senor."

"After a few moments of silent thought, the young sailor said in a low tone:

"I choose life, senor!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PIRATE'S WIFE.

UPON an island, shaped like a wedge, the rendezvous of the Cuban Corsair was located.

The island was odd in shape, and though the fort could not be seen from a vessel passing near, it was nearly split in half by an inlet.

The inlet opened from the small, curved point, among the reefs, and ranging from fifty to a hundred and fifty feet in width ran back toward the large end, which was nearly a third of a mile across, and terminated in a basin in the center.

As it returned toward the large end, the land rose until it ended in cliffs and rugged walls that overhung the sea from a height of seventy to a hundred feet, upon the top being a fringe of trees that had been gnarled and twisted by the fierce gales that often visited those latitudes.

As a vessel entering the island channel could not beat in or out, should the wind be ahead, those desiring to enter had to await the going in of the tide, or its going out, and were thus borne to the anchorage in the basin, or from it to the open sea.

Only a skilled pilot could run the gantlet, and a vessel in the basin had to house its topmasts to prevent them from being seen over the tops of the stunted trees.

The island basin was a couple of acres in size, and the rocks about it seemed as piers, against which a craft could lie moored, with fenders hung over the rocky edge to protect them.

From the basin the rocks arose like terraces to the top, with valley-like openings here and there, in which rude cabins had been built.

There were gardens too, some cattle, and altogether the island presented a home-like look.

It was to this retreat that the schooner of Captain Cutlass went after her capture of the brig, on which was Harold, the young skipper.

The weather was bad, and the sea was wild, for about the pirate island there were numerous others, with bars and reefs which made a perfect caldron of the waters when the wind blew hard.

But Captain Cutlass ran his schooner into the channel, seeming to split the island in two like a huge wedge, until it disappeared in the high rocks at the larger end.

Harold was deeply interested in all that he saw, and gazed about him with amazement to see how nature had favored the cruel pirate chief in making for him so secluded and safe a retreat.

He had chosen between life and death, and had cast his destiny with the man who so boldly flaunted his sable flag over the seas.

He had at once entered upon his duties as an officer, donned a uniform which the chief had given him, and accepted the situation and the alternative with calm courage.

"Come up in the morning and breakfast at my cabin, Senor Harold," Captain Cutlass had said, as he sprung ashore and went off in the darkness, by a pathway leading up the rocky terraces.

In obedience to his invitation, Harold the next morning left the schooner, and, directed by one of the crew to the cabin of the chief, made his way thither.

In the daytime he could see the strength of the island, and how almost impossible it was for a cruiser to find its way there.

The storm had blown away and the sunlight streamed over island and sea, while scores of birds sung merrily in the trees.

There were some score of vessels in the basin, prizes of the pirate chief, and fishing-boats were in the inlet and out upon the sea, catching fish in large quantities.

In front of some of the cabins, as visible down a ravine, some women and children were seen, and altogether it was a picturesque and inviting prospect.

The cabin of Captain Cutlass stood upon a point, sheltered by a pine grove.

From its piazza a good view of the basin and interior of the island could be had, while the sea was visible beyond, and a vessel entering the channel could be seen, though the little house

was so hidden that no one gazing there from the deck of a distant passing craft would suspect its presence.

The cabin was quite large, and substantially built of wreckage and ship timbers, while its four rooms were certainly furnished in a manner that was most luxurious.

The morning was warm and Captain Cutlass was seated in an easy-chair on the little piazza, and near him, to the surprise of Harold, her hand resting upon his shoulder in loving confidence, stood a young and exquisitely beautiful woman.

It was Marcelite, she who had been the Senorita Marcellas, and had become a pirate's wife.

To that lonely island she had gone with her pirate husband, and, unmindful of what he was, as she loved him with all the intensity of her nature, she had remained there, content, if not happy, little dreaming that he was the slayer of her father, little suspecting that he was a sea rover, his hand raised against every flag, but believing him to be what he told her he was, a Cuban foe to Spain only, and one who warred alone upon Spanish commerce.

"Lieutenant Harold, let me present you to my wife, the Senora Marcelite Murel," said Captain Cutlass, rising and making the introduction with courtly grace.

A negress who acted as cook and maid to the young wife, had prepared a most tempting breakfast, and as the chief seemed in pleasant humor, and the Senora Marcelite made herself most charming, Harold found it hard to believe that he was the guest of a man who was dreaded as a fiend incarnate.

After a few days' stay at the island, to refit the schooner, Captain Cutlass set sail, and pity arose in the heart of officer Harold for the beautiful, trusting wife who had accepted the cruel destiny which her devoted love had brought upon her.

CHAPTER XI.

A CRAFT OF ILL-OMEN.

THE scene changes from the Southern waters to the Northern Atlantic, and at a point some leagues off the New England Coast.

It was night and the moonlight streams down with unworied brilliancy, for the air is as clear as crystal and a gentle wind only is blowing to ripple the sea into tiny waves.

A pretty schooner was seen flying over the waters, chased by another of her build and rig.

The former is like a dove, for she is unarmed, flying from a cruel hawk, for the pursuer is an armed vessel.

Brought to at last by a shot, the little merchant vessel is at the mercy of her foe, and awaits the ordeal.

It soon comes, for upon her deck springs Captain Cutlass, the Cuban Corsair, backed by his fiendish crew.

The Yankee skipper of the captured prize can offer no resistance, and, though but a short distance from port, with his vessel almost under the shadow of a bold, jutting point of land, he has to submit to the inevitable.

He has but a crew of half a dozen men, and his wife and children, and a lady passenger are on board.

He strove hard to escape, and urged on by his fair passenger, a beautiful girl who stands near him, he did not come to until he felt he could not escape.

Following the pirate chief on deck came Harold, the young officer, and he stood with folded arms watching his commander, as he talked to the skipper.

Then he started, as Captain Cutlass addressed some words to the maiden, who shrunk from him.

Following her up, Captain Cutlass was suddenly confronted by the form of his lieutenant, and in his ears rung the words:

"Hands off, Captain Cutlass, for, though you broke your pledge to me, that you would not cruise above the Carolinas, you have done so; but you shall not offer insult to this lady."

A breathless silence followed the bold words, and within an instant's time the cutlasses of the two men clashed together.

The pirate chief knew his power as a swordsman, as did his men also, and he wore a cutlass of matchless steel, with gold hilt and guard, set with precious stones, and a scabbard of the same precious metal.

It had never failed him; it had won him his sobriquet—Captain Cutlass—for his skill in wielding it was unrivaled.

Why should it fail him now, with his lieutenant opposed to him, and holding an ordinary blade?

As the swords clashed together, the lieutenant defending the lady, there shot out from behind the bold point of land a large vessel.

It was a frigate, the British flag floating above her decks, and her large spread of canvas sending her along at a rapid pace for a vessel of her size in so light a breeze.

But then her model was one of great beauty, her bows sharp as a razor, and her tall masts and long yards could spread a vast amount of canvas.

Her commander had heard the heavy guns, the firing of the pirate in chase of the little

packet schooner, and had held down the coast to suddenly shoot into view of the outlaw and his prize not half a league away.

So intensely interested were all on the prize and her captor, in what was going on between the chief and his lieutenant, that they did not see the large frigate.

Upon the deck of the latter the crew stood at their guns, the officers at their posts, while the commander calmly paced the quarter-deck.

The latter was a young man, of majestic presence, tall, elegant in form, and with a face to win and to command.

It was a very handsome face, so full of manliness, daring and confidence, that we could not look at him and not admire.

But the craft he commanded had a strange history, and was then known upon the seas as the Fatal Frigate.

A beautiful vessel, she yet had been one of ill-omen since the day she was launched, until she had been a prize, a prison-ship, a floating hospital and, at last deserted by all, for no one cared to command or man a craft that was said to be haunted, and to bring death and bad fortune to all who sailed in her.

Knowing this the one who stood upon her quarter-deck had taken command of her, and against great odds he had made her a beautiful vessel.

An American by birth he had worked his way up to a captain's commission in the king's navy, and, sent to Boston to report for duty, he had become the rival of an admiral's son, the admiral commandant of the fort, and it was sought to destroy him.

Rivals as officers, the young commandant, Lionel Lonsdale by name, became the rival in love of Frank Fenton, the admiral's son, for one of Boston's fairest daughters.

Sent out on the Fatal Frigate to destroy him, Lionel Lonsdale had won fame in her by capturing a French vessel, his superior in guns and men, thus thwarting the plans of the admiral and his son.

A *bon vivant* Admiral Mars Fenton was deeply in debt, and his son, Frank, followed closely in his footsteps, and their creditors were pressing them hard.

Until the coming to Boston of Lionel Lonsdale, Frank Fenton had believed he had the coast clear to win the beautiful and rich Miss Vernon, the daughter of the wealthiest shipping merchant in the town.

Of Lionel Lonsdale little was known, and he was supposed to have been a poor fisher-boy on the coast of Maine, whose good for one had enabled him to work his way up to a king's commission in the royal navy.

But a superb looking man, courtly as a cavalier, brilliant and daring, he had won friends among strangers, and a lucky accident enabling him to pass near Vernon Hall one night, when "Commodore" Vernon, as the master was called, from his owning a fleet of merchant craft, was attacked by ruffians, he had saved the life of the old gentleman, thus winning a warm place in his and his daughter's heart.

Deprived of his crew after his victory over the French frigate, Lionel Lonsdale had remained on board the Fatal Frigate alone with his faithful negro servant, Brandywine, a giant in size, a lion in courage.

Failing to humble his rival, Frank Fenton had picked a quarrel with him, and had been spared by the man he sought to kill.

Placing his son in command of a new frigate that was fitting out for sea, the admiral, urged on by that son, who ruled his father as his father ruled his officers, had facetiously told Lionel Lonsdale to get a crew for himself, feeling that it was impossible for him to do so.

Fitting the Fatal Frigate up at his own expense, Lionel Lonsdale had taken the admiral at his word, and "gotten a crew."

From the town prison, however, he had gotten them, cleverly getting admission one night and taking with him the inmates who were seamen.

Thus he had put to sea in the Fatal Frigate, one night of storm, with a crew of convicts manning his beautiful vessel of ill-omen.

But he had sent in prizes, giving the lie to the ugly rumors that he had turned the Fatal Frigate into a pirate vessel, and he had won many friends among those who had admired his daring and clever thwarting of the admiral and his son.

And it was the Fatal Frigate, the horrid cruiser of ill-omen, that had rounded the headland, and unseen was bearing down upon the pirate schooner and her prize.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

So deeply intent were all on the schooners, at what had occurred thereon, that the Fatal Frigate had not been seen by the pirates until too late to fly.

Then the daring chief, Captain Cutlass, lay in his cabin, livid with rage and frenzied with agony, while his second officer, an Englishman, who acted as surgeon of the outlaw vessel as well as junior lieutenant, was dressing his handless arm, for the young sailor Harold had not

only defeated his captain, but had severed his hand at the wrist!

The wild cries of alarm told that a foe was near, and, soon after, Captain Cutlass found himself a prisoner to the commander of the Fatal Frigate!

His crew were placed in irons, the packet schooner was sent on her way rejoicing, and, with her prize, the Fatal Frigate stood on her course to Boston, while in her cabin a strange scene was transpiring.

Two persons were present, the young commander being one, and he was listening attentively to the other, that other being a young girl, she who had been the passenger upon the packet schooner, and whom Officer Harold had defended at the point of the cutlass from his captain.

The maiden was strangely like the commander of the craft of ill-omen, possessing the same dark eyes, fine complexion, and as beautiful in face and form for a woman as he was for a man.

She was telling with earnest manner how the gallant young frigate officer had interfered in her behalf, had fought a desperate combat with his chief and then had severed his hand from his wrist.

"He had just told the skipper of the schooner that he might go on his way, and had assumed command of the pirate craft, when you appeared in sight, Lionel, so I beg you to spare this young officer, for little does he seem to be like the others, over whom, fierce and merciless as they are, he certainly holds wonderful power."

"I will send for him at once," was the reply, and a few moments after Harold was ushered into the handsome cabin of the Fatal Frigate.

"Be seated, sir," said Captain Lonsdale courteously; but the young sailor bowed and remained standing.

"My sister has informed me of your gallant defense of her, and you certainly must be a wonderful swordsman to defeat Captain Cutlass, and to sever his hand as you did."

"I have been trained, sir, to handle a blade since my boyhood," was the reply, and he added:

"I but did my duty in protecting the lady, sir, from insult."

"You do not seem like a man to be found upon a pirate vessel," and Captain Lonsdale gazed with real admiration upon the handsome young sailor.

The face of the outlaw officer flushed, and then he said:

"Captain Lonsdale, in confidence I would say to you, sir, that circumstances of a painful nature caused me to leave my home and become a wanderer. Ill-fortune dogged my steps, until, in despair, while in delirium from fever, I sought to take my own life by springing into the river. I was rescued by Captain Cutlass, who cared for me until I recovered, and offered me a berth with him."

"I refused it, and yet fate seemed to force me in his way, for he captured, a year after, a merchant brig that I was master of, and offered me the alternative of life or death."

"I chose the former, for reasons I will not now make known, and thus it is that you find me an officer on the deck of a pirate craft."

"And I thank Heaven that I so found you, for I cannot believe you other than a noble man at heart," warmly said the young captain of the frigate, and in a few words he told of his treatment at the hands of the admiral, and how he was then at sea with a convict crew, adding:

"You are just the man I need, Mr. Harold, for the berth of first officer, as I have no one competent to fill the position, and I offer it to you, while, if you can trust any of that pirate crew, and they will serve me faithfully, I will promise them pardon after a time, and let them at once go to work."

"There are many of them, sir, whom force of circumstances made what they are, while Lieutenant English is a good surgeon, and, like myself, was compelled to turn pirate in spite of himself."

"Then I leave it to you, Mr. Harold, to select the chaff from the wheat in your crew, and report to me for duty when you have done so."

"From my heart I thank you, sir, and to you, lady, I feel that I owe the kindness shown me by Captain Lonsdale," and the voice of the young sailor trembled as he uttered the words and quickly he bowed and left the cabin.

"Now, Eve, let me know how it is that I find you on the Boston and Portland packet schooner, when I left you not long ago at Sealands, on dear old Casco Bay, safe with mother?" said Lionel Lonsdale, addressing his sister, when Harold had left the cabin.

"Well, brother, I went to Boston to see you, going by stage, and the horses running away when near the city, I would have been killed, but for a dashing major of dragoons, who rescued me, and who is your friend, and a true one."

"Bert Branscombe, I'll wager."

"Yes, it was Major Bert Branscombe, and he had some friends of his and yours, Commodore Vernon and his daughter, take me from the tavern to their home, where I was their guest, until I took the packet schooner home, as I found you were not in the town, though they said nothing of your having sailed with a convict crew."

"It was just like them all, to tell you no unkind word against me," said Captain Lonsdale, warmly.

"But is not Miss Belle Vernon beautiful, brother? and she likes you very much."

Lionel Lonsdale's face flushed.

He dearly loved Belle Vernon, but he had never told her of his love, yet had asked her to have confidence in him through ill-report, and this was the day before he had sailed in the Fatal Frigate, after having robbed the prison for a crew.

That he had been outlawed by the admiral, he did not know, nor had Eve been told so by Major Branscombe, of the king's dragoons, and Commodore Vernon and his daughter.

"But tell me, Eve, why you sought me?" again asked Lionel.

"Brother, that strange girl, Lola Leslie, who lives far down the coast, and whom you told us saved your vessel once from being wrecked, and when you were wounded was such a devoted nurse to you, has been to Sealands."

Lonsdale frowned at this, and asked, sharply:

"And why did she visit my home?"

"She said that she loved you, and had heard that you loved a lady in Boston, and she would die, or you should die, before you should marry her."

"The girl is crazy, Eve."

"Well, brother, mother and I thought the same; but we feared her, and it so worried poor mamma to have her come there alone as she did, in a little sloop, and make such terrible threats, that I went by stage to Boston to warn you."

"It was good of you, Eve, and when I have sent the pirate chief into port as a prize, I will take you home in the frigate, and then go to see this foolish Lola Leslie."

"Brother, do not venture into port, for I much fear the admiral may detain you, unless you go in after some gallant action with a French vessel-of-war as a prize," said Eve, earnestly.

"I will not enter port, Eve, but send the schooner secretly in by night, for I am determined to keep at sea until, as you say, I can win pardon for having robbed the prison for my crew; but now you must seek rest, for you look pale and worried, and remember, we will soon go to dear old Sealands, and all will come well, even though I do command a craft that is said to be under a cloud of ill-omen."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTIVES.

THE scene changes again to the pirate island of Captain Cutlass, and at a time some months after the capture of the outlaw schooner by the Fatal Frigate.

The buccaneer craft and her captain in irons in his cabin, had been found in Boston Harbor one morning, with a note from Lionel Lonsdale to Admiral Fenton reporting that the schooner was his prize, and he sent her commander, the famous Cuban Corsair, but kept his crew to help in manning the Fatal Frigate.

Other prizes had been sent in, among them a French frigate and sloop-of-war, and the Fatal Frigate had become famous under her daring commander.

In the midst of the excitement following the deeds of Lionel Lonsdale, the town was startled by the news that the pirate chief, Captain Cutlass, had escaped from prison.

The commandant of the prison had been found dead, and the guard over the outlaw chief had disappeared with him, and all efforts to recapture him had proven unavailing.

Then followed another startling piece of intelligence, to the effect that the fleet packet schooner, the Cuban Corsair, had been cut out from her anchorage by the daring one-armed outlaw, and had gotten safely out to sea one night in a dense fog.

The town was in a ferment over these tidings, which was but added to when incoming vessels reported that the One-Armed Buccaneer had gotten a crew, and was cruising the seas more cruel than ever before.

That Captain Cutlass had become more revengeful, a visit to his island retreat will show, for his vessel had gone there, having on board two captives.

Imbittered by the loss of his good right arm, and against the commander of the Fatal Frigate for capturing him, Captain Cutlass had sworn revenge.

While a prisoner he had learned that Lionel Lonsdale's home was upon Casco Bay, where dwelt his mother and sister.

His sister he had fallen in love with, at the mere glance he had at her the night when he captured the packet schooner.

He had, while a prisoner, learned that Lonsdale loved Belle Vernon, so he determined to visit a double blow upon the gallant commander of the Fatal Frigate.

Watching an opportunity he had kidnapped, as he supposed, while in port in disguise, waiting to cut out the packet schooner, Belle Vernon, and carried her on board his vessel.

Then he had sailed for Casco Bay, and Eve Lonsdale had fallen into his trap and become

his prisoner, to find the pretty maid of Belle Vernon a captive, instead of that young lady herself.

Finding out his mistake, Lurline, the maid, had not undeceived him, nor did Eve Lonsdale either, when the two were taken on board the schooner.

And to his retreat in Southern waters sailed Captain Cutlass, rejoicing in his having gotten his vessel, manned her with a crew of Coast Gypsies dwelling upon the Carolina shores, and made captives the sister of Lionel Lonsdale and his lady-love, as he believed.

These triumphs in a manner compensated for his having lost his hand, and he gloated over his triumph with malicious joy.

And the beautiful wife of the pirate chief?

She had received the captives with sympathy, and had believed her husband's story that he held them for ransom, while they had been told that Marcelite was the sister of the One-Armed Buccaneer.

Fearing that his retreat would be betrayed by some of his crew, then on the Fatal Frigate, and especially by Harold, his prisoner lieutenant, the One-Armed Buccaneer was determined to find him another rendezvous, and so had set sail in his schooner to seek an island that would be suitable.

He knew that the Fatal Frigate had been outlawed by the admiral, and that her young commander still so believed her, and that, not going into port, it would perhaps be months before he learned of the kidnapping of Lurline, the maid of Belle Vernon, and his sister.

The brand of outlawry had been quickly raised by the admiral, however, against the Fatal Frigate, but Lionel Lonsdale had kept clear of port, and as the One-Armed Buccaneer had believed, the fact of the kidnapping was unknown to him.

Poor Marcelite had bitterly grieved over the wound that her husband had received, which had deprived him of an arm, but felt happy that his life had been spared, and saw him depart with his vessel, to seek a haven of refuge elsewhere, anxious to have him escape his foes by leaving the island which he then had as a retreat.

But the jealousy of Marcelite had been excited by the presence of the two captives, and the truth soon came to her that her husband was deceiving her.

Once her jealous nature was aroused, and Marcelite was a dangerous woman, and she determined to act for herself, caring not what her husband said or did, when he found out that he had set his captives free.

"He would deceive me, he would cast me off; but I will thwart him," she said in a voice that quivered with emotion, and she at once determined to act, regardless of what the consequences might be.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FATAL FRIGATE'S VICTORY.

CAPTAIN FRANK FENTON, the admiral's son, had not won the fame that his father had hoped he would.

He had managed, in some way, to get money enough to pay off all of his father's debts and his own, and thus give them a breathing-spell from their creditors, but it would be but a short while before both of them would be involved again in debts.

The fact that he had been wounded in his duel with Lonsdale had leaked out, and when appointed to the command of the new frigate, the Saturn, he had been driven back to port on his first cruise, by two French vessels which then lay off the harbor waiting for him to come off and attack them.

One was the equal of the Saturn, the other a sloop of twenty guns, and Captain Fenton was preparing to go out, with other vessels and give battle to the Frenchmen.

After the kidnapping of her daughter, Eve, from Sealands, the poor mother had also gone to Boston, and found there her son, who had just entered port, and the story of Eve's having been cleverly captured by the pirate became known. Instantly Lonsdale had gone to sea in search of the buccaneer, though his frigate was in bad condition from her last battle, and Commodore Vernon had fitted out a swift-sailing brig of his own and manned it, in which to take Mrs. Lonsdale back to her home, and then have the vessel seek the pirate vessel on which her daughter was a captive.

Commodore Vernon, his lovely daughter, and Major Bert Branscombe, the dashing dragoon, who in his early life had been a midshipman in the king's navy, had gone on the brig with Mrs. Lonsdale.

But the sorrowing woman returned there only to die, for, an invalid for years, her heart had broken under the blow of her daughter's having been captured by the One-Armed Buccaneer, and she was buried in the little graveyard, where rested her husband's ashes.

The brig had then sailed in search of the buccaneer, and also to find the Fatal Frigate, to break the sad news to the young commander of his mother's sad death.

CHAPTER XV.

LONSDALE STRIKES A BLOW.

HAVING vowed vengeance against the One-Armed Buccaneer, Lionel Lonsdale's first object was to catch the daring outlaw, and to aid him in this, his young lieutenant, Harold, came to his aid.

He told him that the buccaneer had doubtless gone to his island retreat, with his captives, and that, though there was not water enough for the Fatal Frigate to enter the channel, he could lead a boat expedition by night into the basin.

The Fatal Frigate was accordingly headed southward, and, waiting until after dark, when she drew within sight of the island, she was then headed under full speed to an anchorage as near as the young officer said he dared go, for fear of attracting the attention of some pirate that might be on the watch.

The night was dark, for clouds obscured the stars, and the air was hazy, which was in favor of the attacking party.

The boats were lowered and filled with men, several of them carrying small howitzers; and with muffled oars they started toward the pirate island.

The tide would soon be running in, so that they would have no difficulty in crossing the channel bar, and Captain Lonsdale felt that the hour of his triumph had come.

But, while the boats were preparing to move against the stronghold of the pirates, a scheme was on foot to have the two captives escape from the power of the buccaneer chief.

The originator of this plan was Marcelite, and she was determined, prompted by her jealousy, to remove the one whom she felt that her husband had become interested in.

That one was Eve Lonsdale, and, aided by her negress companion, and one of the pirate crew who she felt would be glad to escape from the island, Marcelite had got a little smack ready, provisioned it for a short cruise, and, when the rest of the dwellers upon the island were asleep, the two captives were led from the cabin where the chief had placed them, and taken down to the shore of the basin.

There Marcelite had bidden them farewell, and stepping on board the smack, the solitary skipper had cast off the line, and, taking the helm had let the little craft drift down the channel with the last of the outgoing tide.

Hardly had the little vessel gotten out into open water and the sail been raised, when it was surrounded by the boats from the Fatal Frigate and a moment after Lionel Lonsdale was on board and his sister was weeping from joy as she leant upon his broad breast.

In a few words, when she could speak, she told of her capture, and how Lurline, whom Lonsdale had often seen at Vernon Hall, had been taken for Belle Vernon.

She also told what a comfort Lurline had been to her, for, the daughter of an honest but poor skipper, the pretty maid was more of a companion to Belle Vernon than a servant.

It was a great disappointment to Lonsdale to learn that the buccaneer was not at his island retreat, and had gone upon a cruise, for he knew that it might be months before his return.

But he decided to go on in his boats and seize the retreat, at the same time promising Eve that Marcelite should not be made prisoner but be allowed to go where she pleased.

Sending his sister and Lurline on to the frigate, under the guidance of Harold, the boats once more rode on and, the tide having turned, moved into the channel.

Harold knew the island well, and the landing having been made, the seamen from the Fatal Frigate awaited the coming of the dawn to attack the few pirates who were upon the island.

The attack began, just as the dawn came, and it was of short duration, for the men-of-war's men had it all their own way and the island was quickly in their hands.

Aroused by the attack, Marcelite had hastily dressed herself, and, with Duena, the negress, she stood upon the piazza of her little home, happy in the thought that her husband was far away.

Up the steep pathway she saw two forms approaching, and one she recognized.

"It is Officer Harold! It is he who has been the traitor," she cried, while her eyes flashed with anger.

Then she added in a low tone:

"I cannot blame him, for Vival forced him to become a pirate."

"No, I cannot blame him."

As he advanced with Lonsdale, Harold raised his hat politely and said:

"Senora, I greet you; but I regret if we have caused you alarm. I would present Captain Lonsdale of the British Navy, who wishes to assure you that no harm shall befall you."

"Yes, senora," said Lonsdale, speaking in excellent Spanish.

"I have taken the island, but I assure you that you are not a prisoner, and it will give me pleasure to obey your will, for Senor Harold has told me of you."

"I thank you, Senor Captain, and you too, Senor Harold, for your kind words, and would

say that it is my wish to remain here upon this island."

"But, senora, it may be long months before your husband returns."

"He may never return, Senor Captain; but still I prefer to remain here, with my faithful servant, and her husband, if you have not slain him."

"Miguel is a prisoner, senora, but not slain, and perhaps Captain Lonsdale will release him at your request," said Harold, referring to a negro, the husband of Duena the negress.

"I will do so, senora, and what you claim as your own property I will not disturb; but let me warn you that I shall yet hunt your husband from off the seas," said Lonsdale firmly.

"Oh, senor, that threat has been so often made before against my poor, misguided husband," said Marcelite sadly.

Lonsdale bowed, and with another assurance that she should not be molested, he walked away, accompanied by Harold, who knowing her well had read aright her motive in aiding the escape of Eve and Lurline.

Stowing the vessels that were seaworthy, with the great quantities of booty found at the island, and loading several old hulks with heavy rocks, Lonsdale left the island, the latter having been sunk across a narrow point of the channel, blocking it, and preventing the entrance of the pirate schooner.

"If he attempts to run in by night, he will wreck his schooner," said Lonsdale grimly.

"Yes, Captain Lonsdale, he will indeed, unless he is warned; but yonder noble woman, pirate's wife though she is, has seen this stone-laden wreck sunk here, and she will be on the watch, day and night, to warn him of his danger," assured Harold, and he pointed toward the cliff, where stood Marcelite, calmly watching the departure of those who had struck such a severe blow against her husband, carrying off his prizes, his booty, his men left on the island as a guard, and obstructing the channel to have him dash upon it to destruction upon his return.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEA DUEL.

HAVING placed prize crews, upon the several very fair vessels, which he had found in the pirate's retreat, and told them to head with all speed for Boston, Lionel Lonsdale, under the pilotage of Harold, who knew those waters well, started upon a cruise in search of the schooner of the One-Armed Buccaneer.

That the buccaneer had gone in search of another island rendezvous, no one but Marcelite knew, and it was therefore believed that he had gone on another cruise, which often lasted several months at a time.

Not willing to trust his sister upon any of the prize vessels, Lonsdale had taken her with him on the frigate, Lurline of course accompanying her, and most happy they were at having the protection of the famous young captain of the Haunted Cruiser, as the Vessel of Ill-Omen was also often called.

After cruising for days among the West Indies, Lonsdale gave up searching for the pirate schooner, and the Fatal Frigate being in need of repair, after the fierce fight with the French vessels—for it will be remembered he had put to sea to hunt down the kidnapper of his sister, soon after he had dropped anchor he determined to head for Boston, feeling very confident that his officers and crew would receive full praise for the splendid services they had rendered the king as the crew of the Fatal Frigate.

Cruising slowly along one day the lookout startled all on deck by his loud, ringing:

"Sail, ho!"

"Whereaway, my man?" called out Harold, who held the deck.

"Dead ahead, sir, and rising rapidly."

"What do you make her out?"

"I cannot tell, but she has three sticks."

"Ay, ay, keep your eye on her and report when you know what she is."

"Ay, ay, sir."

And so the frigate sailed on for half an hour, when from aloft came the cry:

"Ho, the deck!"

"Ay, ay."

"The stranger is a large vessel, sir, and she will pass, if she holds her present course, within a mile of us."

"Ay, ay," and Harold sent below for Captain Lonsdale, who came on deck at once, accompanied by Eve and Lurline.

Taking his glass he went aloft and took a long look at the stranger.

As he descended he motioned to Harold to look come to him.

"Mr. Harold, yonder craft is a shade larger than we are, and from his rig a Frenchman."

"Yes, sir."

"We were crippled in our crew by our fight off Boston Harbor, as you know, and our vessel is not in the best of trim."

"No, sir, she is not."

"Then sending those four prizes to Boston took thirty more men from us."

"Yes, sir."

"Still, but for one thing, I would risk a fight with the Frenchman," and Lonsdale glanced toward his sister and Lurline.

Harold understood him, but was anxious to try conclusions with the Frenchman, no matter what were the odds against them, so great confidence had he in his commander, and so said:

"Well, Captain Lonsdale, it is unfortunate that we are short-handed, a trifle crippled, and have fair guests on board; but then the ladies would be in no danger, below decks, and the speed of the Fatal Frigate is such that, if you saw the Frenchman was too heavy for you, you could run for it, and he certainly could not catch you."

Lonsdale laughed and replied:

"You are spoiling for a fight, I see, Mr. Harold, and as I am in the same humor, we will give him a trial, so call the men to quarters."

"Sail, ho!"

"Ay, ay, aloft! what is it now?" called out Lonsdale.

"A sail far off, sir, in the wake of the French frigate, sir, for the latter carries the tri-color, sir," responded the lookout.

"Well, he may be friend or foe, but we will know whose fight this is before he comes near."

"Run up the king's colors, Mr. Harold, and we'll try conclusions with the Frenchman."

The orders were promptly obeyed, the flag of Great Britain fluttering from the peak, and the men going to quarters with perfect confidence in their young commander, who, after what they had seen him do against such fearful odds, they now regarded as invincible.

Lionel Lonsdale had also perfect confidence in his crew.

The pirate part of it had been accustomed to fight the most desperate battles for booty and to save their necks, and the released prisoners to a man he knew he could depend upon.

His vessel also was as easily handled as a schooner, and that she was very fast he had had frequent cause to know.

So, with his frigate stripped for action he held on toward the Frenchman, the wind, now blowing fresh, upon his starboard, and the enemy getting it upon his port.

Afar astern of the French frigate was the other sail; but it gave the crew of the Haunted Cruiser no anxiety, as they felt that the battle would be settled before it could come up.

The first shot was fired by the Frenchman, at long range, and it flew wild; but it caused Lionel Lonsdale to bid his sister and Lurline go below, to a place of safety which Brandywine led them to.

Another shot from the Frenchman was better aimed, and a third cut through a topsail.

Then came others in rapid succession, some of them doing a little damage, others passing harmlessly by.

Still there came no order from the young commander of the Fatal Frigate to fire.

He was one to bide his time, and he received the fire of his enemy in silence.

Nearer and nearer the two vessels came together, and it could be seen that the Frenchman was a powerful foe.

The Fatal Frigate was under fighting canvas, and she went bowling swiftly along, ready for the fray.

The French frigate carried far more sail, yet did not seem to be making any better time through the water.

Suddenly the Frenchman yawed off and fired a broadside.

The shot flew about the British craft, yet did but little damage, and Lionel Lonsdale said quietly:

"That was an awkward move to make, to fall off and fire."

"Mr. Harold, we will luff sharp and return his broadside."

The French frigate had not gotten well on her way again, before hard rung the order:

"Luff! luff sharp, helmsman—steady!"

"At the port broadside there!"

"Fire!"

The frigate reeled under her broadside, which went off almost as one gun, and the iron hail, well aimed by the thoroughly trained gunners, went crashing into the Frenchman.

Not a shot missed, and sails were cut away, guns were dismounted, bulwarks crushed in and spars and masts splintered, while men fell dead and others were wounded more or less seriously.

Almost instantly another broadside followed, equally as disastrous, and while the Frenchman was dazed by the shock the Haunted Cruiser wore around, as upon a pivot, and poured in the fire of her port battery.

If the Frenchman thought the Fatal Frigate was going to fly, he was quickly undeceived by the vessel again coming down upon him, for Lonsdale was working to windward, and giving another broadside.

The French captain had evidently been taken by surprise, at the deadly fire and rapid maneuvering of his foe, but he quickly rallied to the fact that he would be forced to surrender unless he could hit back with a few terrific blows, and he got his gunners to work, his decks cleared of the wreckage, the dead and the wounded, and opened a hot fire upon the enemy.

But Lonsdale was by no means idle and his gunners fired with more rapidity and better aim, so that the result was more severe to the Frenchman.

The roar of the heavy guns was now appalling, and mingling with it came the rattle of the musketry of the marines, the crashing of timbers, and the shouts and cheers of the combatants.

The French frigate tried in vain to board, but this Lonsdale determined he should not do, as he knew his crew was greatly outnumbered, and the nimble movements of the Haunted Cruiser enabled him to keep out of the way of his enemy, though he held only far enough aloof to avoid close quarters.

The young American commander of a British frigate saw that his vessel and crew were suffering greatly.

He knew also that his sister and Lurline were below decks, and that some shots went tearing through the hull.

He saw another vessel coming down under full sail, and supposed it was a consort of the Frenchman.

By flight he could doubtless escape, and against the odds he was fighting no one would blame him, for his vessel was in no trim for battle and his crew, from her last combat, and sending off men on the prizes, had become greatly weakened.

But Lionel Lonsdale was a dangerous man when aroused.

He saw that Harold, his other officers and his crew depended upon him, and he meant to win, and so called out:

"At the guns there!

"Don't throw a shot away!

"Aim to dismount his cannon!"

A cheer answered his words, then there was a lull, and next came the frigate's fearful broadside, and the effect upon the the French vessel was appalling.

Again the broadside of the British vessel was poured upon its foe, and it could be seen that the Frenchmen were becoming demoralized.

Then the wildest cheers rung out from the crew of the ill-omened craft, and the shots were poured in with telling destruction, while she was handled in a masterly manner that placed the enemy at a great disadvantage.

Nearer and nearer drew that stranger vessel, but nearer and nearer drew the combat to a close.

"Ha! he signals the stranger."

"He is a friend then!"

"Make him strike, lads, before yonder craft comes up, for we will have another fight on our hands!"

Cheers answered the words of the gallant young American, whose hat had been shot off, and upon whose forehead was a gash, a wound that had momentarily staggered him.

His deck was strewn with dead and dying men, two guns had been dismounted, some of the sails flapped wildly, cut from their hold, and the bulwarks were torn and the deck seamed with shot-marks.

But the French frigate was in far worse plight, and Lonsdale felt that but for the vessel coming to its aid the commander would have struck his flag, and so he fought desperately on.

"I'll frighten him into a surrender, Harold, for he does not know that I am short of men," said Lonsdale, and he had the frigate headed for the Frenchman, as though to board.

As he drew near he ordered a broadside poured upon him, and then, above the din, was heard the call:

"Boarders, ahoy!"

He had no idea of boarding, but it had the effect he had hoped for, as the Frenchman at once lowered his flag, although the coming vessel was but a quarter of a mile away.

Thus ended the sea duel, with the Vessel of Ill-Omen a victor.

CHAPTER XVII.

MORE THAN A VICTORY.

THE moment that the French frigate struck her flag, Lonsdale had a boat lowered, while still bearing down upon her, and in it went Harold and a dozen men, to accept the surrender.

Leaving the boat dancing in her wake, the Vessel of Ill-Omen suddenly shot out into the view of the stranger, and, with her rigging filled with nimble seamen rapidly setting sail, she went rushing down upon the craft that was coming under a cloud of canvas to the aid of her consort.

Those on board the strange vessel did not seem to realize that the French frigate had surrendered, until the Fatal Frigate was almost upon her.

It was a handsome brig, of American build, as could be plainly seen, and but one-fourth the size of the Fatal Frigate, so that a combat was out of the question.

With the cessation of the firing between the frigates, the enthusiastic young Frenchman in command of the brig had at once supposed that the British vessel had surrendered, for the clouds of smoke prevented him from seeing distinctly the two combatants, and knowing which one had hauled down her flag.

But when the Fatal Frigate shot out of the clouds of smoke, her rigging filled with men, and canvas being rapidly set, in spite of her crippled condition, the French officer on board

the brig supposed that she was flying from his consort.

But, like a trumpet, rung the words:

"Haul down your flag, or I'll blow you out of the water!"

The French commander realized his mistake in an instant.

Headed toward the Fatal Frigate, and but a few cable-lengths away, he knew that before he could go about in flight and get well under way the British craft would be upon him.

If not, a broadside would nearly demolish him, and though his brig was fast, that vessel bearing down upon him seemed to fairly fly.

So he very discretely luffed sharply into the wind and down came his colors.

Running to leeward of the prize, Lonsdale wore round and bearing up alongside threw an officer and two-score men on board to secure the brig and her crew.

Then he headed up for the French frigate and was bearing slowly alongside when a voice at his side said:

"Ah! how fearful is war!"

"Why Eve, my sister, have you come on deck to witness this red scene—and you too Lurline?"

"Yes, brother, and I congratulate you upon your double victory."

"You are, as your men say, invincible."

"But you are wounded?" and Eve caught sight of the red gash upon the other side of his head.

"A mere scratch, sister mine; but now I have to meet the commander of the French frigate, and I feel for him."

As he spoke the Fatal Frigate glided alongside of the Frenchman, and the American sprung on board and was met by an acting midshipman, for securing his crew as he had, and having to appoint his own officers, Lonsdale had not been able to give any one of them a commission and they simply held their position by courtesy.

"Where is Mr. Harold, sir?" asked Lonsdale.

"He was wounded, Captain Lonsdale, and has retired to a state-room on the prize, sir, and asked that you would visit him at your leisure," said the middy.

"I will do so; but where is the French commander?"

"He was slain, sir; but there is the next officer," and the middy escorted Lonsdale toward the French lieutenant, when suddenly a tall form stepped in front of him, clad in the uniform of a British dragoon officer.

"Major Branscombe!"

"Yes, Captain Lonsdale, at your service, and I beg to thank you for releasing me, as I, and others, were prisoners of the French."

"Permit me to present to you Lieutenant Vancourt, the commander of this frigate, now that his captain is killed."

The French officer bowed haughtily and tendered his sword, which he had not surrendered to Harold, who had been seized, it was said, by faintness, and had gone at once below, leaving the middy in charge.

"Keep your sword, Monsieur Vancourt, and accept my assurances that your vessel was fought most nobly."

"Pray consider yourself and brother officers under parole," was the response of Lonsdale in French, and with a bow he turned to Major Branscombe, and said:

"Now explain your presence on board, major."

"Do you see yonder brig?"

"Yes, and she appears to be the Belle of Blue Water, which Commodore Vernon was fitting out as a privateer."

"You are right, and the commodore and his daughter are in the cabin and await you, for we recognized the Fatal Frigate at a glance, and expected you would do what you did—release us."

"It was a hard struggle though, for I had but half a crew," and Lonsdale accompanied the major into the cabin, where he was greeted by a handsome old gentleman, with a hearty, blunt manner, and his daughter, a maiden of rare loveliness, and whose beautiful eyes were dimmed with tears.

"My dear Lonsdale, I greet you with unbounded admiration and thanks, for you have gotten us out of the hands of the Philistines, and recaptured my brig yonder," said Commodore Vernon, wringing the hand of the young officer.

"And accept my thanks also, Captain Lonsdale," Belle Vernon said in a low, earnest voice.

"But how is it I find you on board this frigate?" asked Lonsdale, with surprise.

"We went on a short cruise, in search of you, Lonsdale, and ran upon this Frenchman in the fog, so we had only to surrender," said Major Branscombe.

"In search of me?"

"Yes, for I have sad news for you, Lonsdale, as your sister's capture by that Ocean Ogre, the One-Armed Buccaneer, completely broke your mother down, and—"

"My poor, poor mother! But I have joy for her heart, as my sister is with me on my vessel, and your little friend, Lurline, also, Miss Vernon, who, as I understand it, was kidnapped for you."

"Your sister is with you, and Lurline also?"

"How glad I am to know this; but still, Captain Lonsdale, your joy at your sister's return to you must be tinged with sorrow, for your mother, as Major Branscombe was about to tell you, is dead."

At the words of Belle Vernon, spoken in a deeply sympathetic tone, Lionel Lonsdale started, his head drooped, and he stood an instant the picture of grief.

But he quickly raised his head and said:

"I will ask you to tell me of my mother's death, Miss Vernon, and to you I would leave the sad task of breaking the news to my sister."

"It is soon told, Captain Lonsdale, for we went to Sealands, father, Major Branscombe and myself, and were there when your mother passed away, her heart broken by the sad blow upon her of your sister's capture by that Ocean Ogre, as Major Branscombe rightly called the Cuban Corsair."

"We buried her by the side of your father and set sail, hoping to find your vessel, when we were captured by this frigate."

"I have registered a vow in Heaven against that man, that curse of the sea, and I now have to avenge my mother's death, for his act murdered her!"

And Lionel Lonsdale's eyes fairly blazed with the intensity of his feelings, while his manner was strangely calm.

Then he bade them go on board the Fatal Frigate and join his sister and Lurline as his guests, while he remained on the French prize to get things shipshape once more.

As they went over the side to the deck of the Fatal Frigate, Lonsdale called to the middy and told him to show him to the state-room where Lieutenant Harold was.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE UNHEEDED WARNING.

"SPITFIRE ahoy!"

The cry rung out over a tempest-tossed sea, and startled the crew of an armed schooner which was driving swiftly along under storm-sails through the darkness and pouring rain.

"Spitfire ahoy—ahoy! Hard—hard down your helm!"

Again the cry rung out, and it was in a woman's voice.

The crew looked at each other in awe, for their superstitious fears suggested that a spirit was out upon the black waters.

"Spitfire ahoy! Lay to, or you are doomed!" again came the cry from out the darkness and storm, but from whence none on the pirate schooner could tell.

On swept the schooner, and not a man on board, even to Captain Cutlass himself, but what thought that they had been hailed by a spirit of the sea.

Before the schooner lay a dark object, that soon proved to be an island.

It was the retreat of the Cuban Corsair, and the commander of the schooner took the helm himself, determined to run into the channel by night and in the storm.

The wind was from a direction which would enable him to reach the basin without waiting for the tide, and he knew the channel well.

Out from the bounding sea the vessel suddenly ran into the land-sheltered waters of the channel, and with the wind abeam she went driving along toward the basin at the further end of the island.

Suddenly, seemingly from the shore ahead, came in a hoarse voice:

"Ahoy, the schooner! Death is ahead of you!"

Captain Cutlass knew not what to do.

For a moment he was at a loss how to act.

He could not put about in that narrow channel, and he felt that all that he could do was to strip the schooner of what sail she had and drop anchor.

The words were upon his lips to issue the orders, when there came a terrific crash, a shock that threw every man to the deck and snapped off the masts as though they had been pipe-stems.

"Great God! my schooner is a wreck!" cried the One-Armed Buccaneer, springing to his feet and gazing upon the ruin about him.

It did not take long for him to discover that the channel had been blocked in some mysterious manner, and that he had dashed upon it, driving along at a rapid pace, tearing the bows off of his vessel, knocking her warts out of her, and leaving her a total wreck beyond repair.

"Silence!" he yelled to his jabbering crew, who had at first feared that the schooner would sink in the channel, but soon discovered that she had driven nearly half her length upon the obstructions, whatever they were, and there rested firm as a rock.

The men became silent at once, and then the buccaneer chief shouted:

"Ho, the land! Who hailed?"

"It was Miguel, master, your slave."

"Ha! what has happened here?"

"The Fatal Frigate has been here, master, and left the island a wreck," came the answer through the darkness.

"And the prisoners?" shouted Captain Cutlass, trembling with rage.

"All gone, master, with all your booty, too."

"Are you alone on the island?"

"No, master; Duena is with me, and Senorita Marcelite went out in the life-skiff to warn you, senor."

"Curses! it was she that hailed us, and we deemed it a sea spirit."

"Bless the brave woman, for she risked her life to save us, and, fool that I was, I drove on to my destruction."

"But, oh! will I not be avenged for this night's work of yours, Lionel Lonsdale— Ha! you are here, my noble Marcelite?" and the pirate chief sprung to greet his wife, who just then boarded the schooner, and glad he was to turn to her in his distress.

"Yes, Vival, I am here, and alas! you heeded not my warning, and wrecked your vessel."

"You did a brave act to go out to hail me in this sea, Marcelite."

"I did my duty, Vival, and since ten days ago, when your foes left the island, faithful Miguel, Duena and myself, all that remain here, have watched for your coming."

"By night we built a fire on the shores, to light up the danger abroad, and warn you; but the driving rain to-night put out the fire, and so I took the life skiff and rowed out to meet you, should you come."

"I saw your vessel and I hailed you; but alas, my warning was unheeded."

"We could not see you in the darkness, Marcelite, and so believed you a sea spirit; but Lonsdale, in his Fatal Frigate has paid me a visit?"

"Yes."

"And got all my booty?"

"All, except what I claimed as my own."

"Ah! he did leave you something, then?"

"Yes; but he burned the cabins of the people, and sent them off in the vessels he took as prizes."

"Then he blocked the channel here, and you have done just what he supposed you would, run in and wreck your schooner."

"Curses rest upon him."

"I asked him to allow me to remain with Miguel and Duena, and he did so, leaving us ample provisions."

"And my captives?" asked the pirate.

"He naturally took his sister and her friend with her, was the evasive reply."

"Well, though he has wrecked my vessel, I still remain and have my gallant crew left to me."

"And Marcelite," was the woman's low uttered words.

"Yes, and you, my wife; but I am not cast down, and it will not be long before I once again sail the seas, and upon a better craft."

"They have ruined my stronghold, they have captured my vessels, and I have but one arm to fight them with; but woe be unto those who have struck me, for I shall now indeed become a fiend against my foes," and the pirate raised his handless arm toward Heaven, as though registering there his guilty vow of revenge, and Marcelite fairly shuddered, as she beheld his demon-like expression in the glare of a battle-lantern which one of the men just then approached with.

CHAPTER XIX.

MARCELITE'S DEVOTION.

CRUEL as was his nature, Vival Murel, the One-Armed Pirate, was touched by the devotion of his wife.

He had intended to have gotten rid of her, and then force Eve Lonsdale to marry him; but this had been prevented, and, after his retreat was ruined, his booty gone, and his guard and the rest of his band carried off prisoners, Marcelite had still remained, and she had done all in her power to save him and his vessel.

She had not made known that he would soon return so that a force would have been left to capture him; but she had allowed Lonsdale to believe that he would not be back for months, and she had asked to remain on the island and await his coming.

Merciless though he was, revengeful in a wonderful degree, he yet felt the devotion of his beautiful wife to him, and said earnestly:

"Marcelite, you have saved me, and you will find that I shall yet have for you a home, where you need fear no foe's coming."

"Now let us see what is to be done."

With the dawn the pirate chief beheld the damage done.

His beautiful vessel could no longer float, and, but for the obstructions upon which she had driven with such force, she would go to the bottom.

The booty in the hold could be saved, the guns and crew were all right, but the schooner had met her death-blow.

In his kindness of heart, Lonsdale had left for Marcelite a little *goleta* in which he told her she could make her way to the nearest port, in case her pirate husband never returned.

This vessel would carry all the people he wished to take with him, and Vival Murel looked to it as the means to help him out of his trouble.

"Marcelite," he said suddenly stopping in his

walk, for he had been pacing to and fro, but in deep meditation.

"Well, Vival?"

"Did not that treacherous officer, Harold, lead Lonsdale and his crew here?"

"Yes, Senor Harold was the pilot."

"The traitor," cried the pirate.

"Did he tell you how I lost my hand, Marcelite?" quickly asked Vival.

"No, but that beautiful maiden did."

"Miss Lonsdale?"

"Yes."

His face flushed, for he felt that his wife had discovered how he had offered insult to Eve Lonsdale and that Harold had protected her.

"I will also have a debt to pay that traitor," he said.

"Senor Harold did but his duty, Vival, and, as you forced him to become your officer, he was but right in accepting a position with Captain Lonsdale, who offered it to him for protecting his sister."

"You were the guilty one, Vival, and you have made some sad mistakes, for the young lady you captured as Miss Vernon was only her maid, or a kind of companion."

"Devils!" shouted the pirate.

"It is true, and she played her part so as to deceive you, and thus save Miss Vernon."

"Why was it you took those two ladies from their homes, Vival?"

"To avenge myself on Lonsdale."

"Well, I would ask you, my husband, to be content on making war on men, and let women alone."

"I love you, and I have proven my love; but beware not to arouse me to revenge, Vival!"

He saw that she was deeply moved, and so said:

"Marcelite, you are the only friend I have on earth, the only being I trust."

"Here, do not you turn against me, but take my hand in token that you possess my whole love."

She sprung toward him with a cry of joy and threw her arms about his neck, while she said:

"Vival, be true to me, and I will help you, will cling to you through all."

"I will, Marcelite; but now that we understand each other, now that the cloud is past, let us see what is best to be done."

"Your crew are true, I hope, in your misfortune?"

"Yes, they are Sea Gypsies, as you know, and their chief, Wilder, to whom I went for men, ordered them to serve me well, and sent Leon with them, and he, as my lieutenant now, will obey me, and they will be obedient in all things to him."

"But I must go to one of the West Indian ports in the *goleta* and secure a vessel."

"Can you do so?"

"I can get a trader, and it will help me to secure a vessel or some other good craft."

"Do you expect to go to Boston after a vessel?"

"I understand you, Marcelite, you still doubt me?"

"No, I will trust you, Vival; so go there if you can get your schooner; but what about me?"

"Ah! I forgot to tell you that I had found another retreat."

"It is the island home of some wreckers, and there are some half a hundred of them, but I captured one of their little boats and their chief was upon it, and knowing that he could help me I treated him well, and we made a compact together, and we are to go to his retreat, and he is to be my second officer and his men are to join my crew."

"It is a place harder to reach than this, and can be defended by a few men against a fleet."

"I will take you there, Marcelite, when I return here with a vessel large enough to carry the schooner's battery and arms, and my crew."

"Now I will hasten to get away, for that Fatal Frigate may take a notion to cruise down this way again."

An hour after, the little *goleta*, at high tide, was lifted over the sunken hulks, and with a dozen men on board, the pirate set sail, leaving Leon, the Sea Gypsy lieutenant, with the balance of his men, to get the battery and cargo of the schooner ready to put on board the vessel he returned with, to be transferred to the new rendezvous.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PIRATE'S VOW.

SEVERAL weeks passed away, and Marcelite began to feel very anxious about her outlaw husband, fearing that he had gone to some port, been recognized and put to death.

But, one morning, as she went to her accustomed point of lookout, she saw a distant sail.

As it drew nearer she recognized it as a *goleta*, and lateen-rigged vessel, often seen in the West Indian waters.

It came swiftly along, and, as it drew nearer, Marcelite saw that it was a very rakish looking craft, long-hulled, narrow, sharp as a wedge forward and with a narrow, projecting stern.

She had three masts and carried tremendous sails, her bowsprit running far out over her sharp bows.

She stood up well under the pressure of canvas,

and the stiff breeze then blowing, and Marcelite saw from the way she was heading, that it must be her husband.

Soon after the black flag and gold cutlass, in the grasp of a red gauntleted hand proved to her that the One-Armed Buccaneer had returned.

The vessel shortened sail, as she neared the channel, and entering it, came along with the incoming tide alone.

Her headway was slowly checked as she neared the wrecked schooner, so that her bows glided softly up to the stern of the pirate craft, and she was hauled alongside for one-fourth her length.

As he reached the schooner, Vival Murel was greeted with a cheer by Leon and his Gypsy sailors, and ordering them to at once get the battery and cargo on board, the chief rowed ashore to meet Marcelite.

"What a beautiful vessel you have, Vival, and she seemed to sail like a witch," she said with enthusiasm.

"She does, Marcelite, and she is a beauty, while her speed is greater than any craft I ever sailed in."

"Where did you get her, for she seems new?"

"She is new, having just been completed, and she was built for a dispatch boat between the Spanish ports among the West Indies."

"And they sold her to you?"

"Oh, no, they wanted a West Indian pilot and a crew, and I volunteered my services."

"My agent in Havana told me about her, and I was ordered to get a crew and go on board, to take charge until a Spanish officer, who was to command her, arrived in port."

"I went on board, and, as a storm came up that night that nearly drove every craft in the harbor ashore, I took the opportunity to get under sail, with others, and put out to sea, so here I am."

"You ran off with her then?"

"Of course, it was better than to have to purchase a craft, and, as the tornado sent a number of vessels to the bottom, it will be supposed that this one went down also; until they hear to the contrary," he added significantly.

The new vessel was indeed a beautiful one, a trifle larger than the wrecked schooner, yet capable of spreading far more canvas.

She was complete throughout, but carried no guns, these not having been put on board of her as was intended, and so the battery of the schooner would come in well.

"You will not have to go to Boston now, to cut out a vessel, Vival, for this one will do," said Marcelite, and she seemed glad that it was so.

"No, this vessel will do, and I will not have to go to Boston to get my old vessel, Marcelite; but those who dwell there shall know soon that the One-Armed Buccaneer is again afloat," he said, fiercely.

The guns, small-arms, ammunition and cargo of the wrecked schooners were transferred to the *goleta* with all haste, and the next day she was turned, stern-foremost, out of the channel-way, and sail was set upon her tall, slender lateen yards.

Away she sped over the sea, winning the admiration of all on board, and carrying her battery as though it had been made especially for her.

Marcelite gazed sadly at the island retreat as the *goleta* left it astern, and when, after a night's run, the Wrecker's Isle came in view, she watched it with deepest interest, as it was to be her home.

It was a large island, surrounded by sunken reefs, and looked uninhabited; but the wreckers had found out that there was a haven within it, and that skillful pilotage could carry a vessel to a safe anchorage where it would not be visible from any craft sailing by upon any side.

In fact, the sunken reefs and shoals about it caused a vessel to give the dreary-looking island a wide berth.

Here the band of wreckers had made their home, some three-score of them in all, half of whom were wild, reckless men, the others being their wives and children, almost equally as wild and reckless.

Upon other islands they were wont to set their false beacons on stormy nights, luring trusting mariners to death, and thus they reaped a harvest from wrecked vessels.

But never on their own island, where they hid away after their dastard deeds, did they set a beacon to attract attention to their retreat.

Having set a signal, agreed upon with the wrecker captain, the One-Armed Buccaneer sailed as near to the island as he dared, and then lay to, waiting for a pilot to come off to run the *goleta* into the harbor.

In a short while after firing his gun and hoisting his flag, a small sloop shot out from the island, seemingly coming out of the solid rock, and headed toward the *goleta*.

As she ran alongside a heavily-bearded, bronzed-faced man sprung on board, and was greeted by Vival.

"You delayed long, senor," said the wrecker who was the captain of the island band.

"Yes, I was delayed."

"This is not the vessel you had before, and I was suspicious of you until I heard and saw the signals we agreed upon."

"No, I lost my schooner," and the pirate explained how, after which he said: "This lady is my wife, Senor Waldo."

The wrecker bowed politely, while Marcelite, in her pleasant way, held forth her hand, which he took with a look of pleasure at the honor done him.

"Now, Senor Waldo, if you will run the *goleta* into your haven, we will arrange what is to be done, for I am anxious to get off to sea as soon as possible, as I have a duty to perform."

Waldo, the wrecker, took the helm, and the *goleta* was headed through the dangerous channel toward the island.

A mistake would wreck her; but the man knew every reef and shoal, and he had a nerve of iron, so that the *goleta* glided into the harbor and came to anchor among half a dozen small craft. It was a wild, dreary place, with a score of rude cabins, built of wreckage of ships, perched about upon the rocks, and without a tree or shrub near them.

Such was the home of the wreckers, where they were content to hide away and live upon the losses and miseries of others, those whom they lured to destruction.

Marcelite's heart sunk within her at the sight, but she said nothing, and landing with Vival, Miguel and Duena, made her way to the somewhat pretentious cabin, which her pirate husband had had the wreckers build for her.

Waldo showed the cabin off with an air of pride; but Marcelite turned her face away to hide her tears, and murmured:

"And this is to be my home?"

"This is what my love has brought me to?"

"I am a pirate's wife, and this is a fitting abode for such."

After a few hours' stay in the harbor, while those among the wreckers who were to join his crew, were sent on board, the One-Armed Buccaneer bade Marcelite good-by, and an hour after, with a wrecker pilot at the helm, for Waldo remained in charge of the island, stood out to sea.

As the fleet vessel began to rise and fall upon the waves of the ocean, the buccaneer raised his handless arm toward heaven and said:

"Once more am I afloat, and I vow revenge that is merciless toward man and woman alike. Heaven register my vow."

CHAPTER XXI.

HAROLD'S SECRET.

WHEN Captain Lionel Lonsdale went to the state-room, in the French frigate, to which his acting lieutenant, Harold, had gone, his heart was full of sadness, for it was a bitter blow to him to feel that his mother was gone forever from him.

His joy at the return of his sister, was dimmed by this great sorrow, and the glory of his victory was forgotten in his misery.

He had learned to admire his young officer, Harold, and had become greatly attached to him during the time they had been together.

He hoped that the wound he had received was not serious, and so he went to see him as his first duty, leaving others to get the frigate in ship-shape condition once more.

The fire of the Fatal Frigate had been terrific and the dead and dying were upon all sides.

Guns had been dismounted and to one who did not understand the punishment a vessel could stand, the frigate would have appeared a perfect wreck.

With the groans of the wounded echoing in his ears, Lonsdale entered the state-room, when the midshipman told him where to find officer Harold.

To his delight he saw the young officer sitting up, and he arose promptly as his captain entered and greeted him.

"I am glad to see you are not seriously wounded, Mr. Harold, and had I known that you were hurt I would not have sent you on board the frigate."

"Captain Lonsdale, I am not seriously hurt, in fact, I received only a splinter wound; but I beheld upon this vessel, when I boarded, those whom I would not have had seen me for worlds, and so I hastily retreated to this state-room, ere they did so, asking Midshipman Rose to take charge, and giving out that I was wounded."

Lonsdale seemed surprised at what he heard, and yet made no reply, and Harold continued:

"I saw, ere I entered the cabin, two persons who are well-known to me, and that is my excuse for sending for you, sir."

"I have a secret, Captain Lonsdale, one that I cannot now make known to you; but I want to ask you to let me leave this vessel where these two people are."

"My dear Harold, this French frigate had on board three friends of mine, who were taken on a British brig some days ago."

"They had sailed in the brig in search of me, to give me the saddest news that I ever had to listen to, for they told me of my mother's death."

"In my inmost heart, Captain Lonsdale, I feel deeply for you, sir."

"I thank you, Harold, I thank you for your sympathy."

"My joy at the restoration of my sister is dimmed by this sad blow, and I have forgotten almost the victory I have won."

"But those of whom I spoke are Major Bert Branscombe, my most intimate friend, and an officer of king's dragoons."

"The others are Commodore Hiram Vernon and his daughter, of Boston, and also my friends."

"Can they be the ones to whom you refer?"

"They are, sir."

"Well, they have already gone on board the Ill-Omen, and so you can retain command of this frigate and follow me into port."

"Thank you, sir; but if I remain in my state-room while in port, you will not feel unkindly toward me?"

"No, Harold, for I know that you have a secret of some kind, and yet I cannot believe you, in spite of your fear of being seen, to have done an act that was criminal, for I do not hold your forced cruise with Captain Cutlass against you."

"Again I thank you, Captain Lonsdale, and I hope some day to prove that your confidence in me is not misplaced."

"Some day, sir, you shall know the whole truth, be it for or against me; but now I ask not to have Commodore Vernon and his daughter see me, nor that I be placed where there are those in Boston Harbor might meet and recognize me."

"It shall be as you wish, Harold, and you can leave the command of the frigate to your next officer when you reach Boston Harbor."

"As soon as I cut away from you with the Fatal Frigate, go on deck and get things to rights, for the vessel is in a bad condition."

"But I have given the French officers the freedom of the ship under their parole."

"Now I will leave you," and Lionel Lonsdale left his young officer, whose secret had forced him to seek the seclusion of a state-room on the French frigate, when he caught sight of Commodore Vernon and his daughter.

Going on deck, Lonsdale gave a few orders to the midshipman, sent another officer and some men on board the Frenchman, from his own vessel, and then the grapnels were cast off, and the two cruisers drifted apart.

For several hours they lay upon the sea, while undergoing repairs necessary to set sail, and then the Fatal Frigate spread her canvas and headed northward.

The brig, Belle of Blue Water, followed in her wake, and nearly a league astern came the French frigate, Harold in command, and anxious to keep well out of view of a spyglass that might be turned upon him from the deck of the Fatal Frigate.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ADMIRAL AND HIS SON.

ONE afternoon, some weeks after the fierce sea duel between the Ship of Ill-Omen and the French frigate, a signal-gun on Beacon Hill called the citizens of Boston from their homes, and the British soldiers from their barracks and camps, to learn the cause of the firing.

There were in the harbor, at the time, the French prizes captured by the Fatal Frigate, the pirate schooner which had been taken by Lonsdale, at the time that the Cuban Corsair had lost his vessel, and the superb British frigate, Saturn, commanded by Captain Frank Fenton, the admiral's son.

These vessels, excepting the latter, were undergoing repairs, intending to be taken into the service of the king.

But there was a great scarcity of seamen at that time in the colonies, and, outside of the Saturn's crew no men could be obtained to man the other vessels.

But they all had an officer and guard crew on board, and these were on the alert also, when the signal-gun told that there was something in the offing to cause alarm.

The Saturn at once began to prepare for sea, and the soldiers at the harbor forts went to their posts as though they expected a foe to fight.

Military Hall, a social gathering-place for the young British officers, of army and navy both, became deserted at the signal, and those who had been enjoying a friendly glass of wine together, hastened toward a high hill from whence a fine view of the harbor and distant sea could be seen.

What met their vision were three vessels heading in through the Nantasket Roads, rounding Long and Spectacle Islands, and pointed toward an anchorage under the lee of Governor's Island.

The three vessels were two frigates and a brig, and above their decks floated the British ensign.

The appearance of the two frigates indicated that they had been in a severe action, and so said those among the group who turned their glasses upon them.

A carriage had driven up to the hill-top, and in it was an elderly gentleman, wearing the brilliant uniform of an English admiral a century ago.

Hardly had his carriage halted, when a young officer, attired as a British naval captain, approached, and saluting in a hasty manner, said somewhat brusquely:

"You recognize the leading ship, I suppose, admiral?"

"I do not, my son; but I heard the signal that there were armed vessels in the offing, and drove here, to see what they were," answered Admiral Fenton, in response to his son's question.

"I started to go out with the Saturn, thinking they were foes, when I was signaled from the fort that they were friends."

"And what are they, Frank?"

"The leading vessel, sir, is the Ill-Omen."

"The devil!" muttered the admiral.

"Yes, sir, the devil is her commander," was the ill-natured remark.

"And the others?"

"The second one is a French frigate, sir, and evidently a prize of the Fatal Frigate."

"Boy, your chances are growing very slight to win Belle Vernon, if you let Lonsdale take the wind out of your sails as he is doing," whispered the admiral, so that the coachman could not hear him.

"What can I do, sir?" was the angry retort of the son.

"Do as Lonsdale has done, capture a few prizes."

"But what is the third vessel?"

"It is Commodore Vernon's brig, the Belle of Blue Water, that went out to sea in search of the Ill-Omen, and with Major Branscombe, the Commodore and Miss Vernon on board."

"They found the Fatal Frigate, then?"

"So it seems, father."

"Well, Lonsdale comes into port again a victor, and if he keeps this up, the king will not have to send a fleet over, as he intended to do, but simply forward crews for the vessels which that gallant young American officer has captured."

Frank Fenton muttered a curse, even in the face of his august father, for the words stung him to the quick.

Still he could not but admit in his own heart that the man whom he had sought to ruin had won fame in spite of him.

He had gotten his father to send Lonsdale to sea in the craft of Ill-Omen, with a crew that had ringleaders paid to mutiny, and ordered that he, Frank Fenton, the first lieutenant, should command the vessel.

Lonsdale had quelled the mutiny and brought into port a prize far stronger than his own vessel.

Then his crew had been taken from him, and yet Lonsdale had gone to sea with a crew of criminals.

Frank Fenton had urged his father to outlaw the Fatal Frigate, and while under the ban of outlawry, Lonsdale had sent in the pirate chief, Captain Cutlass, and his schooner, following them up with other prizes.

Lonsdale had been refused the new frigate, the Saturn, and he, Frank Fenton, had been made a captain and sent out in her, when he was driven back by a French Frigate and a sloop-of-war which she had captured from the British, while soon after, the Ill-Omen frigate had whipped the two vessels in sight of port, and they now lay in the harbor her prizes.

Now, while the Saturn and her commander lay idling in port, the Ill-Omen was coming in with another prize.

The old admiral who had been ruled by his son, thought of all those things, and so did Frank Fenton, and the former said:

"Well, Frank, I shall drive down to the shore and welcome Lonsdale, and more, I shall give a full pardon to every man on his vessel, convicts though they were, and if having been prisoners made them such splendid fighters, why zounds, sir, I wish you would put all of the Saturn's crew in jail too for awhile."

So saying the admiral drove away toward the shore, while his son, joined by a party of his friends, or toadies, went slowly toward Military Hall, well knowing that the news would soon be there of what the Ill-Omen frigate had done since leaving port after her victory over the frigate and sloop, then prizes at anchor in the harbor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SON'S DEMAND.

AS Captain Frank Fenton had supposed, the news of all that had occurred soon reached Military Hall, which was crowded to its fullest extent by an enthusiastic crowd of army and navy officers, with a few of the wealthy citizens of the place, discussing what had been done by Lionel Lonsdale on his Ship of Ill-Omen.

Major Bert Branscombe, a young noble, possessing large wealth, handsome and brave, dropped in on his way to his quarters, and the story was told in a manner that gave deserved credit to the daring young captain of the Ill-Omen cruiser.

He told of his rescue of his sister and Lurline, and how he had missed a battle with the Frenchman and forced a surrender, though the enemy was a larger vessel than his own, and more, he had but half a crew.

So fiercely had he fought his foe when he saw help coming in the captured brig, that he forced him to strike his colors almost in the very teeth of the Belle of Blue Water.

The story of the death of Mrs. Lonsdale was

also told, and the young captain came in for the sympathy of many who were there.

And yet some were still inclined to sneer.

He was but an American, and besides he had only a convict crew, aided by pirates, and his vessel was surely a craft that no honest man would care to command.

Then, too, he had been outlawed, even though Admiral Fenton had withdrawn the brand of outlawry.

Such were the sneering remarks of some, and they all came from the toadies of the admiral's son.

But these same toadies took good care that Major Branscombe and several other well-known friends of Lionel Lonsdale did not hear their sneers.

As for Frank Fenton, he was in a quiet rage.

He heard all that the commodore and his daughter had done for Mrs. Lonsdale, and knew that Eve had gone home with them as their guest.

This was sure to put Lionel Lonsdale on most intimate terms at Vernon Hall, and the thought was a dread one, for he feared that his chances were slim to win the heiress and her fortune.

In ill-humor he went to visit his father.

He found the old admiral nursing a gouty foot, and at the same time indulging in a decanter of sherry, which he was drinking slowly, and with evident relish, as he glanced over a paper he held in his hand.

"Ah, Frank, it is you."

"Come in and read me the rest of this report, for my eyes ache," said the admiral.

"I would like to speak with you, sir."

"Finish the report, sir, first, and you'll find it good reading, for it is the statement by Lonsdale of his cruise, since taking command of that Haunted Craft."

"Then I care not to read it."

"But I care to hear it, and if you do not wish to read it, simply depart."

"I wish to see you, sir."

"I tell you I am busy."

The son saw that his father was in no humor to trifle with, so he took up the report, written in Lonsdale's bold, distinct hand, and read it to the end, the old man now and then checking him when he attempted to skip a few lines.

It was a distasteful thing for Frank Fenton to do; but he had no alternative, and when it was finished threw it viciously upon the table, while he said:

"The conceit of that fellow is unbearable."

"It is a modest, masterly report, sir, far different from what you would write."

"In fact, my son, though it grieves me to say so, I very much fear that you will never be able to write such a report of gallant deeds done."

"You think highly of this American upstart!"

"Zounds, sir! but he has forced me to do so in spite of myself."

"I have not forgotten, sir, that when you forced a quarrel upon him, mind you, with my consent, I admit, that he spared your life twice in the duel with swords and pistols."

"I have not forgotten that no officer of the king's navy has made such a record, and against odds—yes, against my fighting him down, and you doing all you could to crush him."

"I frankly told him to-day that he was a wonderful man, and I gave him a pardon for every man on board his vessel, be they convicts or pirates, smugglers or wreckers."

"Zounds, sir, but I wish we had more just such men to fight for the king."

Frank Fenton's temper was not improved by this praise of his rival, and he said hotly:

"Father, I came to ask you if you intend to let that man steal my bride from me, and consequently her large fortune?"

"Zounds, sir, how can I help it if she loves him?"

"I do not believe that she loves him."

"Then marry her."

"He is in the way, for he has turned her head."

"My son, you are a fool."

"I am my father's son," was the sarcastic response, and the old admiral winced.

"Father, if I prove to you that Lionel Lonsdale intends to turn traitor to the king, will you put him in irons?"

"Instantly, if you prove it; but I do not believe you can, for his actions have shown his loyalty."

"The tocsin of war has not yet sounded for the colonists to rise in arms; but when it does you will find that Lonsdale will go against his king, and mind, he will take with him, to turn over to the rebels, any vessel and men that he can steal from Great Britain."

"I cannot believe it, for he is a king's officer."

"If I bring you the proofs of what I say?"

"Bring them."

"If I do you will put him in irons?"

"Yes, at once."

"If I give you the proofs of what I say, I have a demand to make."

"Well?"

"Will you grant my demand if I prove all I have said?"

"Well, yes."

"Remember an admiral of England should not break his word."

"Don't be insulting, boy, or you will find that an admiral of England can punish his own son."

It was Frank Fenton's time to win now; but he said:

"My demand is that you turn Lonsdale over to me to hang at the yard-arm of my frigate, when I prove to you that he is a traitor to the king."

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOO LATE.

SHORTLY after the departure of Frank Fenton from his father's pleasant quarters, the name of Captain Lionel Lonsdale was brought in to the old admiral.

"Admit him at once sir, and then bring more wine and glasses," said the admiral.

"My dear captain, I am glad to see you, and beg you to accept my sympathy, for I have heard of your misfortune since seeing you," said the admiral.

Lonsdale bowed, thanked his superior, and accepted a glass of wine which a servant handed to him.

"Your good health, Lonsdale, and I am sorry my son has just left and is not here to join us."

"What a pity that you and my boy cannot agree, sir."

"I fear that the fault lies with Captain Fenton, sir, for I have had no ill-will against him."

"Zounds, but I believe you are half right; but I wish he had remained your first officer and could have shared with you your fame, while as it is, a convict gets the honor of having ably seconded you, according to your report."

"Oh no, Admiral Fenton, you read my report wrong, to so take it, for Lieutenant Harold was no convict."

"He was born and reared a gentleman; and, captured by that Ocean Ogre, was forced to serve him or die."

"He chose to live, and the pirate lost his arm through Harold's protecting my sister."

"I am glad to learn this, for I deemed your officers and men all convicts or pirates."

"So they were, sir, though some through unfortunate circumstances, which they could not control; but surely they have won pardon for the past and shown themselves good men and true to serve the king as they have."

"Ah yes; but would they serve the king against the Colonies, think you?" slyly asked the admiral.

"That I do not know, sir."

"They are mostly Americans?"

"Many are; others are Englishmen, and there are Spaniards, French and Cubans among them."

"And you, of course, would serve the king?" was the leading question.

"I am a king's officer, Admiral Fenton, and I will do my duty as long as I hold a commission in his Majesty's name."

The admiral did not see that this could be interpreted in different ways, but taking it to mean that come what might he would serve the king, he responded:

"So I believe, Lonsdale, all reports to the contrary notwithstanding."

"Then it is said that I would not serve my king, sir, should the Colonies go to war with the mother country?" quickly asked Lonsdale.

"Well, yes, I have heard it so, hinted," the admiral responded.

"Wait and see, Admiral Fenton, what I will do should war break out."

"I will," said the old man, not seeing just how he could do otherwise than wait, but feeling assured that his son's suspicions were wrong regarding the American captain.

"Now, Admiral Fenton, I have come to ask a favor of you, sir," said Lonsdale.

"Well, sir, out with it."

"My prize money is considerable, as you must know, sir, and I am willing to place it against the Ill-Omen frigate as purchase money, for there are some improvements I wish to make in the vessel, which as my own I can do, and I will pay for all such improvements from my own purse."

"The frigate has been pretty badly cut up, and I desire to have her go at once into the dock for repairs, and to have the improvements made I referred to."

"It shall be done, Lonsdale."

"I will leave Lieutenant Harold in charge, for he knows all there is to be done, and I wish to take my sister to our home on Casco Bay, where she will pass a few weeks in putting things away and closing up the old house, for she will, now that my mother is dead, come to Boston and make her home, leaving the estate to the care of faithful servants."

"I wish to ask you, admiral, for the loan of the pirate schooner, Spitfire, which is all ready for sea, to take my sister to Sealands, and while she is there I will cruise along the coast and think that I can bring you a prize in the shape of a pirate, that has been seen in that locality of late."

"Of course, I will take my own men to man the schooner, and will fit her out for the cruise without cost to the king, sir."

"I am certainly willing, Captain Lonsdale, and after what you have done, you would not

surprise me by coming into port with your schooner towing a French sloop-of-war."

"I thank you, sir," said Lonsdale with a smile, and soon after he took his own departure.

For some reason that bit of news traveled slowly, and it was not until late the next evening that it reached the ears of Frank Fenton at Military Hall, that the Ill-Omen was already in the dock undergoing repairs, and that her commander was to go on a cruise in the pirate prize, Spitfire.

"I'll have the admiral stop this, for I have decided to have the Spitfire follow me to sea tomorrow as a tender for the Saturn," cried the admiral's son, and he hastened out of the place to seek his father.

But he had not gone far before he met Major Branscombe, who called out to him with a desire to tease him:

"Expect to hear of more gallant deeds at sea, Fenton, for I have just seen Lonsdale off in the Spitfire."

"Too late!" hissed Frank Fenton as he heard this, and he walked slowly back to Military Hall, his heart filled with bitterness against his rival in love and war.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE STAIN UPON HIS NAME.

WHEN Lionel Lonsdale had decided to put the frigate into the dock, to be thoroughly overhauled and improved in some respects, he went to the state-room occupied by Harold, and for a long while the two were closeted there together.

Then the young captain went up to Vernon Hall, having promised to come there to dine, and he was anxious to let his sister know just what he had decided upon.

As it was out of the question for Eve to remain alone at Sealands, and she would not accept the invitation of both the commodore and Belle to make her home with them, Lonsdale had decided that it was best for him to get her a home in Boston, and she could go to Sealands, pack up what she wanted to bring with her, and leave the place in charge of old, faithful servants.

Eve was pleased with this plan, and it being decided that she should go on the pirate prize with her brother, Lurline offered to accompany her, for that young miss now held the position of companion, rather than maid, to Miss Vernon.

While Eve and Lurline went off to make their preparations to depart, Lonsdale asked for an interview with Commodore Vernon.

"My dear commodore," he said, when the two were seated together in the library, "if I touch upon a forbidden subject with you, I hope you will pardon me; but I know that when you are wrong and can be set right, you would wish to be."

"Assuredly, sir," and the commodore spoke like a man who wondered what was coming next.

"Commodore, may I ask if you know what ever became of your son?"

The old man started, his face paled and grew stern, and he said, somewhat sharply:

"I neither know, sir, nor care."

"Commodore Vernon, we are all liable to err, and, as I understand it, your son was rather wild and in that way got mixed up with some reckless spirits."

"He fled from home with the stain of murder upon his name, and—"

"Let us not discuss this subject, Captain Lonsdale, for it is a most painful one to me, I assure you."

"It is for that reason, sir, that I wish to discuss it, for I feel that a great injustice has been done, and I would like you to hear what I have to say."

"I will listen, sir."

"In one of his orgies, it seems, your son was with a party of young men, and the next evening one of the four was found dead, having been murdered, and a weapon belonging to Mr. Vernon seemed to prove who had been the murderer."

"There had been four in the party, and of these one was dead, and your son was the person accused by the others."

"He had already left the place however, but returning, had found the murdered man lying on the floor, and the others gone."

"In his fear that he would be accused, he made the mistake of flying, and the result was that he went branded as a murderer."

"He was wholly guiltless, and yet feeling that he could not prove his innocence, he drifted about the world until he met one and then the other of the four who had been with him that night."

"Those two confessed that they were the murderers, using your son's weapon in the deed."

"Thank God!" said the old man in a low tone.

"I came across your son, Commodore Vernon, when he was an enforced officer upon the schooner of the Cuban Corsair."

"He it was who saved my sister from insult, and since then he has ably aided me in my work, and when I tell you that the gallant offi-

cer known as Lieutenant Harold, is none other than Harold Vernon, you will know why I have come to you."

"Thank God!" again broke from the lips of the old commodore.

"Your son recognized you and your daughter on the French frigate; and I allowed him to keep out of your sight, as he requested.

"He came into this port with me, and I now leave him in command of the frigate, while I go East in the schooner.

"He does not know that I have come to you; but he told me his strange story, and said that he would have full proof of his innocence, before going to you with his confession.

"But I, knowing that you carried a sorrow in your heart, and also how Miss Vernon loved and grieved for her outcast brother, came to you to tell you the truth.

"Lieutenant Harold says he would hardly be recognized now, having changed so; but he will keep close on the frigate until he is ready to prove his innocence before the world.

"That he was in the pirate vessel is nothing against him, for it was life or death to him, and that he acted honorably when the time came, is proven by his defense of my sister, and that he severed the hand of that Ocean Ogre at a blow.

"Now, commodore, I have told you the story as it is, and I will leave it for you to say whether you wish to see your son, or not."

"Gladly! oh, so gladly, will I see the poor boy!

"But he must let us go to him, for until all is cleared up, it is best that he remain unknown to the public."

"So I think, sir," said Lonsdale, and before he sailed in the schooner, with Eve and Lurline on board, he arranged it so that there was a meeting in the little cabin between the old commodore and Belle, with the long-lost son and brother; but upon that meeting let not even the pen of romance intrude.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STORY OF CASTLE BLEAK.

CASTLE BLEAK, on the rugged coast of what is now the State of Maine, was a weird old house about which hung legends of murder and mystery.

It was located back from a high cliff, overlooking the waters adjacent to the mouth of the Penobscot, and was a stone mansion, large and substantial, surrounded by hundreds of broad acres, from which its former master had gotten his income.

But that former master, a Spanish Don, it was said, had one night been murdered, with his young wife and honest servants, and the country folk had said that pirates were the guilty ones, having put to sea after their deed.

Still, strange to say the pirates had contented themselves with murdering the inmates of Castle Bleak, and not robbing it.

With such a history the place went to decay for years, and then a French exile, as men called him, came to Castle Bleak, bought the property for a nominal sum, and, though leaving an air of neglect and ruin upon all about, turned the interior of the mansion into a palatial home.

He brought with him an only child, a maiden of twelve at the time she came to Castle Bleak, and several foreign servants.

The Exile, as he was called, and Enrique Leslie by name, kept his riding-horses for himself and daughter, and his yacht and boats in the haven under the cliff.

The daughter was sent, for a few years, to Portland, to attend boarding-school, and the father lived a life of luxurious idleness in the old home, receiving no visitors, intimate with no one, and with his servants showing him the respect that they would a prince.

The house was luxuriously furnished, and many rare paintings and objects of art were to be found in it.

The table service was of solid silver, the servants dressed in livery, and Monsieur Leslie wore the richest clothing, with diamond knee and shoe buckles, the finest velvets and laces, and his shirt front was ornamented with a precious gem of rare value, while he also wore rings of great worth.

Lola Leslie, his daughter, while at school in Portland, was one day rescued by Lionel Lonsdale, then a junior lieutenant in the king's navy, from being carried off by kidnappers, and several years after, when he commanded a schooner, which was worsted in a severe fight off the Maine Coast, her commander wounded and the craft had taken refuge among the island-studded waters, her destruction in a storm would have followed but that a daring pilot came out and ran her to a place of safety.

That pilot was Lola Leslie, grown into a beautiful maiden, and who, having been taught to sail a boat, row, swim, shoot by her father, was able to carry out her brave resolve to save the little schooner whose danger she saw from the cliff.

Finding that the wounded commander was the one who had saved her from the kidnappers, Lola had told her father, and Lionel Lonsdale had been taken to Castle Bleak and nursed

back to life, for he was most dangerously wounded.

In the days that the young sailor was there Lola had learned to love him with all the intensity of her nature, and he might have, in the end, asked her to become his wife.

But, ere he spoke words of love to her, he was ordered to Boston on duty, there met Belle Vernon, and he felt that he did not love Lola.

She, learning in some strange way, that Lionel Lonsdale was reported engaged to Miss Vernon, acting with the wild impulse of her nature, at once set sail in her little sloop for Sealands, and demanded to know if it was true, threatening to kill him, rather than yield him up to another.

Alarmed at the threats of the beautiful, but love-mad girl, Eve Lonsdale had gone to Boston to seek her brother and warn him, and he had sailed for Castle Bleak.

There, on the cliff he had met Lola and told her that he did not love her as he should one whom he meant to make his wife.

Maddened, the maiden had attempted first to kill him, by driving a knife to his heart, but changing her mind had rushed to the cliff, and, ere he could catch her, had sprung from the dizzy height into the sea.

The appalled young sailor had hailed his crew and search was made, but the body was not found.

Enrique Leslie was away from home at the time, and Lionel Lonsdale had left a letter telling him all.

But the father refused to take the statement as the truth, and seeking Lionel Lonsdale in Boston accused him of being the murderer of his child and forced him into a duel with him.

In that duel, finding that the frenzied man meant to kill him, Lonsdale ran him through the sword-arm, and thus ended the fight.

Back to his desolate home went Enrique Leslie, meaning to be avenged upon Lonsdale some day, and it was to Castle Bleak that the young captain intended going, after he had left his sister and Lurline at Sealands.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FOR A DAUGHTER'S SAKE.

THE pretty little armed schooner, which had belonged to the Cuban Corsair, was a very fleet craft, and made the run from Boston Harbor to Casco Bay in a very short time.

It was with very sad hearts that both Lionel Lonsdale and his sister landed at Sealands, and went up to the deserted home which was their birthplace, and remembered that over in the little burying-ground on the hill their poor mother lay by the side of their father.

The faithful old servants, the parents of Lonsdale's negro valet Brandywine, gave them welcome and did all in their power to make them comfortable.

But Lonsdale seemed anxious to be away, for there was a duty to perform which he cared not to neglect.

So, after one night at Sealands, and having decided with his sister all that was best to be done, he said, sadly:

"Come, Eve, go with me to mother's grave, and then I must bid you farewell; but I will leave Brandywine and four of my men to help you pack up and get all in readiness to return to Boston when I come back for you, for the truth is, sister mine, we will not be able to dwell at Sealands for many a long day, as the Colonies are surely going to war with England."

"I feel it, I know it, brother, and you hold a king's commission."

"Yes, Eve."

"And if war should come, brother, what will you do?"

"Wait and see, Eve," he said with a smile, and then he opened the little gate that led into the graveyard, for they had been walking along toward the place as they talked.

With uncovered head, Lonsdale approached the spot, and stood in silence, while his sister sunk upon her knees above the grave and burst into tears.

"Come, Eve, I must be off, and mother is free from all pain and sorrows."

"Let us go."

He led her away, and suddenly she asked:

"Leo, where do you go from here?"

"I have been anxious to make a strike at the Casco Corsair's, sister, and took this opportunity to do so."

"You are going elsewhere?"

"I expect to cruise for about two weeks along the coast."

"Are you not going to Castle Bleak?"

"I expect to."

"Brother, why go there?" and she looked almost frightened.

"Eve, Leslie considers me, or says that he does, the murderer of his daughter."

"He came to Boston and challenged me."

"I spared his life by disarming him, and he again rushed upon me and I wounded his sword-arm."

"He was friendless then, so I asked Major Branscombe to be his second, and Colonel DuBose, who commands the outer forts, acted for me."

"When the duel was over, Leslie wrote to

Admiral Fenton and to Miss Vernon that I was his child's murderer, and he has sworn to kill me."

"I was told by many of his charges against me, and I am now going to Castle Bleak for two reasons."

"First, when Major Branscombe brought our dying mother to Sealands, he went to Castle Bleak, and a duel is on between my noble friend and Leslie."

"Oh, brother!"

"Leslie is anxious to fight him, and all of my friends as soon as his arm gets well."

"Second, Major Branscombe discovered, while in those waters, a man who saw that unfortunate girl spring from the cliff, and I wish to seek that man, carry him with me to Castle Bleak, and convince its master that he is wrong in his cruel charge against me."

"Now I feel deeply for Leslie, and know how he must suffer with grief; but I cannot permit Branscombe to meet him on my account, and I am determined that it shall not be."

"But the fearful risk you run, my dear brother."

"No; for I am his master with the sword, and should he drive me to extremes, such as a duel with a pistol, you may have no fear, sister mine."

"You do seem to bear a charmed life, Leo; but come back as soon as you can, for you know my anxiety, and I hope you can bring me word that Mr. Leslie has come to his senses."

"I hope so, Eve," was the reply, and as they had now reached the mansion, Lurline joined them, and they went down to the little pier which jutted out into the sheltered basin wherein the Spitfire lay at anchor.

Farewells were quickly said, and going on board of the schooner, Lonsdale gave the order to get the anchor up, and set sail, and away sped the Spitfire upon a cruise that was destined to be a most eventful one.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A STRANGER IN PORT.

SOME days after the Spitfire sailed from Boston Harbor, on her cruise to Sealands and after the Casco Corsairs, as Lonsdale had told the admiral was the main motive of his voyage, a strange craft came into port.

Her appearance was such as was seldom seen in those northern latitudes, and, entering the harbor in daylight, she attracted a great deal of attention and some excitement by her remarkable rig and build.

She was very long, lay low in the water, though her bulwarks were very high, and she was sharp forward, with a razor-like cut-water, and her stern was lean and projecting far back over the rudder-post.

Her rig was of a character still seen in the West Indies, and she was known as a *goleta*.

She carried three masts, and spread upon long yards three enormous lateen sails, while her bowsprit projected far out over the water, enabling her to set a large quantity of head-sails.

Not a gun was visible upon her decks, and her crew consisted of but half a score of men, dressed in striped shirts, wearing white duck trousers and red skull-caps.

They were all a dark-looking set, nimble as monkeys and spoke in a language of their own.

The cabin of this vessel was fitted up very elegantly, and the master let it be known that he was a West Indian planter, who had come to a Northern port with a cargo of sugar and syrup for sale.

He stated to the harbor master that his name was Leon, and that he would sell for cash for the highest price he could get.

The lateen-rigged craft anchored down by Long Wharf, at the foot of King's street, and her polite young owner and captain, the Senor Leon, set about to find a purchaser for his cargo.

This was readily done, and the Whirlwind, as he called his vessel, was soon unloaded and there was difficulty in finding merchants to give her another freight for Southern ports.

It was a surprise to those who frequented the wharves, and the seamen on the different vessels in the harbor, how rapidly the crew of the West Indian craft worked, and that her owner employed no outside aid in unloading and loading her, and this was commented on at the time.

But certain it was, that a week's stay in port was sufficient to enable the skipper to unload and load his vessel, and get ready for sea.

He was to run out at night, he said, not caring to delay longer in port, and all was ready awaiting the coming on board of some one connected with the vessel.

That one had gone up to the headquarters of Admiral Fenton and sent in a request to see that august personage.

The admiral was sipping his Madeira, nursing his gouty foot and enjoying his pipe, when the card was brought in to him.

It read simply:

"SENIOR LEON,

"West Indian Trader Whirlwind."

"Show the senor in!" said the admiral, wondering why he had received a call from the West Indian, of whose presence in the port he had heard.

In a short while a tall, bearded man entered. He was elegantly dressed, courtly in his manners, wore his hair and beard long, and was certainly a most distinguished-looking person.

"Senor Leon, I believe?" said the admiral, quite impressed with the stranger's appearance. "Yes, senor, and I feel honored to meet Admiral Fenton, of whom I have often heard," was the response.

The admiral felt delighted that he was known to fame, and offered his visitor a chair and a glass of wine, both of which were promptly accepted.

"You appear to suffer, Senor Leon, as I observe that you wear your arm in a silk sling?" said the admiral.

"Yes, senor admiral, I was thrown against the bulwark of my vessel, in a severe storm we encountered, and my arm was broken."

"I have only been able to have it properly cared for since coming to this port."

"I hope you will fully recover its use, sir; but pray tell me how I can serve you."

"I came to seek you, admiral, to ask if there is not a price set by the King of England upon the head of the Cuban Corsair, who is known as Captain Cutlass?"

"Well, sir, there is a price upon his head, set by his Majesty the king, and another that the Colonial merchants offer."

"May I ask the amount of this blood-money, Admiral Fenton?"

"The king's price is five thousand pounds, that of the Colonial merchants four thousand."

"A handsome sum, Senor Admiral, for the head of a buccaneer."

"He is worth every pound of it, sir, and I will promote the officer who captures him, and I think I know who that will be."

"Who, may I ask, Senor Admiral?"

"Captain Lonsdale."

"He commands the vessel they call the Ship of Ill-Omen, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, and he has sworn to hunt this Ocean Ogre from the deep, and he will do so, I feel assured."

"But why do you ask regarding the pirate?"

"Well, Senor Admiral, I am anxious to capture this Ocean Ogre, as you call him."

"I have suffered through him, and I also wish to win the prices set upon his head, and shall try and do so; but I would be glad to get from you a permit to raise the British flag, and enter British ports, for though a West Indian, I intend to trade with this town, and if I have a protection paper from you, senor, it will aid me greatly."

"This is a strange request, sir."

"I feel that I can find the Ocean Ogre if any one can, Senor Admiral, and I only desire a protection paper from you, in case I wish to enter different ports, and I am willing then to devote my time to hunting for the pirate."

"I see; but your vessel is not armed."

"No, senor, but what I shall do to capture the buccaneer will not be by force of arms, for, knowing his haunts, as I do, and that he visits certain ports in disguise, I will be able to entrap him."

"Well, sir, I will give you what authority I can."

"And I will not claim more than the price of his head, senor, turning over to you his vessel as a prize, with the booty on board."

The admiral seemed pleased with this, and wrote out a document, which he placed his seal on, and handed to his visitor, who rose and took his leave.

An hour after the departure of the stranger, the admiral received a note which caused him to forget his gout and spring to his feet with the alacrity of a boy, while he uttered a good, old-fashioned English oath that fairly startled his servant, who stood waiting to see if there was an answer.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SATURN GOES TO SEA.

THE note which had so excited Admiral Fenton was as follows:

"On board
H. M. Frigate Ill-Omen.

"To the Honorable Admiral MARS FENTON:—

"SIR:—I have reason to believe from certain information that I have, that the lateen-rigged West Indian trader, Whirlwind, is nothing else than a pirate craft of which Captain Cutlass is chief.

"May I ask that I be allowed to go in chase at once, for the Whirlwind put to sea a short while since?"

"I can secure for the chase the armed brig Belle of Blue Water, if you will grant me permission to do so."

"I anxiously await a reply and sign myself,

"With esteem,

"HAROLD,
Lieut.-Com'd'g H. M. Frigate Ill-Omen."

"Who brought this note?" yelled the admiral. "A sailor, sir," cried the frightened servant, who had never seen the admiral so excited.

"Tell him there is no answer, and then return here to me."

The servant obeyed.

"Now, carry this note as fast as you can to my son, on board the frigate Saturn."

"Yes, my lord; but, sir, would I not be more

likely to find the captain at the Military Hall, sir, begging your Honor's pardon."

"Zounds, sir, zounds! but you seem to know the boy."

"Yes, go there for him!"

Away darted the servant, and as he had surmised, he found Captain Frank Fenton enjoying a game of cards and a bottle of wine, at the Military Hall.

The young officer frowned at the servant, when his pleasure was broken in upon, but hastily arose, with flushed face, when he glanced at the note, and throwing down the cards, said:

"Gentlemen, duty calls, and I must leave you."

"Latimer, go at once on board the Saturn and get ready with all haste for sea."

The latter had been addressed to a stout officer of middle age, who had also been one of the card-party.

"No bad news, I hope, Fenton?" said Major Bert Branscombe, who was also present, and he eyed the sailor curiously.

"No, no bad news."

"Good-evening."

So saying, Frank Fenton left Military Hall, and directed his steps toward the admiral's quarters, while Major Branscombe quietly arose and also left the building.

Without delay Frank Fenton entered his father's rooms, and he saw that the admiral was excited, for he called out:

"You got my note?"

"Yes, sir, telling me to go to sea at once, for there were nine thousand pounds awaiting me."

"Well, I want you to go in chase of the lateen-rigged craft which has been in port the past week."

"The West Indian?"

"Yes."

"What has she been doing, sir?"

"She is a pirate."

"Why, a pirate?"

"It is true, and if you catch her you'll find on board that Ocean Ogre, Captain Cutlass."

"Can this be possible, father?"

"It is, as I have proof."

"But mind you, you simply go off on a cruise, and not a word as to your reason: but overhaul the lateen-rig, and bring her back, if, after you search her, you find on board the Ocean Ogre."

"Now go, Frank, and earn your nine thousand pounds, the price set on that pirate's head, while the vessel will also be a valuable prize."

"Father, I thank you, sir, and the money I get, or my share, I will divide with you."

"God bless you, my boy, and if you capture the Ocean Ogre you will take the wind out of Lonsdale's sails, and more, after all may win the fair Belle Vernon for your wife."

"Now do not delay a minute, for the Whirlwind has a long start of you."

The young sailor grasped the old admiral's hand and disappeared.

Half an hour after the beautiful frigate Saturn stood out of the harbor under all the sail she could set that would draw a capful of wind, and far away off on the sea, beyond Beacon Island was visible, through a powerful glass, the lateen-rigged craft that had so cleverly entered port and departed, flying under false colors in so doing.

Major Branscombe, knowing that Frank Fenton hated Lionel Lonsdale, and had urged his father on to acts against him, which the old admiral otherwise would not have been guilty of, had suspected some treachery toward his friend then absent in the Spitfire on his cruise eastward.

So he had followed Frank Fenton; had seen him go to the admiral's, then go on board the Saturn, which at once went to sea.

"I'll go on board the Fatal Frigate and see what I can find out, for that shrewd fellow Harold may know something," said the major.

Down to the shore he went, and securing a harbor boat, started for the spot where the frigate was undergoing repairs.

Lieutenant Harold was pacing to and fro in the large and handsome cabin of the Ship of Ill-Omen when Major Branscombe was announced.

The face of the young sailor was anxious, and he greeted his visitor in a manner that showed he was not in a very good humor, for he said:

"I am glad to see you, Major Branscombe, but I am intensely annoyed just now, as I fear the tardiness of Admiral Fenton in replying to a note that I wrote to him will prevent the capture of the Cuban Corsair."

"Hal is that scamp in these waters, Mr. Harold?" quickly asked the major.

"He has just sailed in that lateen-rig that came into port a week ago."

"Can this be true, sir?"

"It is, without doubt."

"Then you need have no anxiety, for the Saturn has just gone to sea and in chase."

"The Saturn has just gone to sea, sir?" asked Harold, in amazement.

"Yes, and it is without doubt in chase of the West Indian, for I was at Military Hall an hour ago when a servant came in hot chase for Captain Fenton to go at once to the admiral, and, fearing some plot against Lonsdale, I followed the captain, whom I heard tell Lieutenant Latimer to get the Saturn ready for sea at once,

and then saw Fenton go on board; but you look amazed, Harold."

"I am more than amazed," was the low reply of the young lieutenant of the Ship of Ill-Omen, and he gave a long, low whistle as indicative of his surprise.

CHAPTER XXX.

DOUBLE DEALING.

"MAJOR BRANSCOMBE?" and Harold spoke in a manner that showed he had something of moment to communicate.

"Well, Mr. Harold?" answered the dragoon.

"Let me tell you just what has occurred, and ask your candid opinion of it, for I would like to know if you see the matter as I do."

"I would like to hear what you have to say, I confess, Harold."

"Well, sir, when that lateen-rig came into the harbor, I at once was suspicious of her."

"She appeared honest enough, but then I have been, as you know, a pirate in spite of myself, and my experience in West Indian waters has made me very suspicious of any craft that is of rakish look."

"So I ordered two men, that I knew I could wholly trust, to go on duty as spies on the stranger."

"I got them stations ashore, in a room that overlooked the vessel at her anchorage by day, and at night had a place on the wharf, among some lumber, for their point of observation."

"They were supplied with a good glass, and one was to be on duty all the time, watching every move on the craft, and to write it down for me."

"They were to relieve each other by day and night, and keeping together, if any one landed from the strange vessel, one of them was to follow him and report all he did."

"By this close watch I got points of a suspicious nature, and had I an idea that the *goleta* meant to sail so soon, I would have been ready for her."

"But the captain played a sharp trick there, and gave out that he was to sail in two days, whereas he was then all ready."

"The men I had on watch told me enough to convince me that the man Leon was not the captain, though he professed to be."

"Then they discovered that there was a day crew, and a night crew, for although there were not over a dozen men visible at one time on the decks, they were not the same men!"

"This is strange," said the major.

"Then, at night only, there was one man who was wont to come ashore."

"This man wore his right arm in a sling, and he was the captain."

"To-night this man came ashore, and walked away into the town."

"One of my men followed him, and he went to the admiral's."

"Ah!"

"Yes, major, and then returned to the wharf, when he hailed the *goleta*."

"A boat was sent ashore, and my man, hiding in the lumber, heard one of the men say:

"Ah, captain, we did not expect you so soon."

"Then the one addressed as captain replied:

"I did what I expected, and now we must be off, for I've felt a rope about my neck ever since I've been in port."

"This would indicate that he deserved hanging."

"Yes, major, and that man was none other than Captain Cutlass in disguise, for one of my men, who had sailed with him, recognized his voice."

"Then they came to me, and I wrote the admiral that I had proof that the *goleta* had sailed, with Captain Cutlass on board, for she was under way before I got the news."

"And his reply?"

"That is what I am coming to, sir."

"I told him I could take the Belle of Blue Water and go in chase, and please to permit me to do so."

"As you are aware that my father now knows who I am, I will tell you that I gave him to understand two days ago of my suspicions regarding the *goleta*, and he told me to take the brig, if I needed her, for the frigate was not available, and so I could have gone at once in chase."

"But the admiral sent word to me that there was no answer to my note, and so I could do nothing, and was expecting certainly a communication from him by other than my messenger."

"But he sent none?"

"No, sir."

"When was it you sent your note?"

"Just one hour and a half ago," and Harold looked at his watch.

"And just an hour ago Frank Fenton received the note from the admiral."

"This looks bad, Harold."

"It does indeed, sir."

"How does it look to you?"

"Well, major, it looks to me as though the admiral used my information to have his son make the capture, ignoring me."

"That is it."

"But it would be but a small honor for the Saturn to catch the little *goleta*."

"Well, the honor would be in capturing the Ocean Ogre, and more, there is a large price upon his head, and I happen to know, that though the admiral is considered a rich man, both he and his son are in debt, and unable to pay."

"But I think Fenton rolled that note up and threw it in the waste-box up at the Hall, and I will go and see, though I hate to do anything that seems underhand."

"Still, if the admiral is playing a double game, I would like to know, for your sake, and for Lonsdale's," and the major left the cabin and was soon walking briskly toward Military Hall.

He was gone but half an hour, and upon re-entering the cabin said:

"Mr. Harold, here is the note, and I found it where I saw him throw it."

"I have not read it, so you please do so, as I will return it where I picked it up when I return to the hall to-night."

Harold unfolded the crumpled and torn piece of paper, smoothed it out and read:

"Sir:—Come to me immediately."

"Send first to have the Saturn get up anchor and sail for sea."

"The *goleta* has just left port, and it is worth nine thousand pounds to capture her."

"Don't delay."

"Yours,
"FATHER."

"This note shows, sir, that the admiral played a double game."

"Yes, Mr. Harold, and I would advise you to keep it, for it may come useful some day."

"It is unworthy the man, and degrading to the rank he holds."

"But then he is completely under the thumb of his son."

"The Saturn, major, will never catch the *goleta*, for Captain Cutlass would not have entered this port in a slow-sailing vessel, and that craft looked like a racer."

"Well, I hope the Saturn will not catch her; but what brought Captain Cutlass in here?"

"He doubtless captured some sugar-laden vessel at sea, and ran in here to sell the cargo, and that which he took out, the trusting merchants will lose."

"Then he may be up to some deviltry again!"

"True; but I thought his vessel was a schooner."

"She was; but he may have lost her in some engagement, or gotten hold of this new one by capture, and preferred her, for she is a beauty; but there is no chance for me, or for you, sir, to get out in the brig in chase."

"I can see none; but I hope the *goleta* may find Lonsdale, and thus get caught."

"I hope so, sir; but mark my words that *goleta* had a large crew, and many guns hidden away somewhere beneath her decks, and she will not be unarmed long after she gets out of this port."

"Still, if she was armed, and had her full crew, Lonsdale would capture her, did it come to a sea combat."

"There is no doubt of that, Major Branscombe," was the confident reply of Harold, and soon after the dragoon took his departure, feeling deeply chagrined at the double dealing of the old admiral to push his son to fame, and at the same time feather his own nest with a slice of the large reward offered for the Ocean Ogre.

CHAPTER XXXI. A SPECIAL PARDON.

It was a surprise to many of the citizens to find that the Saturn had sailed during the night.

Where had she gone so secretly, was the question that many asked, and yet no answer could be given, for no one knew, or knowing, would not tell.

The admiral had remained awake until long after midnight, awaiting to hear the distant gun that would tell him that the Saturn had brought the *goleta* to, when he would be glad to seek sleep, knowing that he had gotten a snug sum in gold by his sharp practice after receiving Harold's note.

But he did not hear that gun, and when he awoke in the morning he was told that there was not a sail in sight, nor had the Saturn returned.

"I should have borrowed the brig from Vernon, for the wind was too light for the Saturn last night," said the admiral, and he was not in the best of humor, when a name was brought in to him by his servant.

He started slightly, for it was the commodore who called, and, with a guilty conscience he wondered if the old merchant knew of the note from Harold and that the Saturn had been sent to sea.

But the commodore came in with no indication on his face that he knew anything to the admiral's detriment, and took the seat which was near the old sailer, while he said:

"Well, admiral, I have come to seek a favor of you to-day."

"Anything I can do, Vernon, you know I

will be only too happy; but is there any news?"

"No, and I supposed you had some, as I learned that the Saturn had sailed last night."

"Yes, my son said that he would take a short cruise."

"And that pretty West Indian craft has also gone."

"The *goleta*?"

"Yes."

"She sailed last night, too; but, by the way, what do you know of that young Lieutenant Harold on the Ship of Ill Omen?"

The commodore started, and said quietly:

"I know that he has made a great name for himself of late, admiral."

"Yes, Lonsdale spoke in the highest terms of him; but last night I got a note from him telling me he had reason to believe that Captain Cutlass sailed on the *goleta* and asking permission to take your brig and go in chase."

"And you granted it?"

"No, indeed! for I did not believe his report could be true, and, besides, in the absence of Lonsdale, I would not care to let him go, so I just sent word there was no answer."

"I am sorry, Admiral Fenton, for I am sure that that young officer would not have sent you such information unless it was well founded, and it is of Harold that I have just come to see you."

"Indeed! and what about him, Vernon?"

"You are aware, I believe, admiral, that I had a son?"

"Yes, I have so heard, and that he went to the bar, and I felt for you, remembering that my boy might have done the same."

"My son was a little wild, admiral, but had never done an act of dishonor, and I condoned his reckless extravagance and dissipation on account of his manliness and honor."

"But he disappeared one night, and it was reported that he had murdered a comrade once at a gaming table."

"I could not but believe that he was guilty, and so cast him out of my heart, as I believed, forever, as he had fled, thus stamping himself with the mark of guilt."

"But now it seems that he was with a party of three others, playing cards, and he left early, but returned to the room to find one of the party dead."

"He had been killed with his, my son's knife, and the others having fled, the poor boy, in his dismay, feared that he would be hanged for murder, and sought safety in flight."

"He drifted about from port to port, until he was captured by Captain Cutlass and forced to serve him; but he it was who stepped before the chief, when he captured Miss Lonsdale, and severed the right hand of the pirate."

"Zounds, sir! that was young Harold on the Ill-Omen ship."

"Yes, admiral, my son!"

"Zounds!"

"He has proof, admiral, of the fact that he was not guilty of that murder, for the two men who were with him are both on the frigate, pardoned for their crimes by you, as belonging to the crew of the Ill-Omen; but the favor I have to ask of you is that you will give my son a special pardon, in which you speak of the proofs of his innocence, and extend the pardon for his service with the Ocean Ogre, which was forced upon him."

"Do this for me, Admiral Fenton, and you will make me a happy man, and my noble boy also, for then he will dare face his accusers, and, as he has forever banished the past, he will prove to you that he is worthy of your kindness."

"My dear Vernon. I will be more than glad to do as you wish, and will at once have the papers made out."

"You will pardon me, I know, if I seemed brusque at first to you this morning; but the fact is I am greatly worried about some financial obligations which I cannot liquidate until I receive my remittances from London, and they fret me more than I like to admit, and you arrived when I was conning over them."

"But, admiral, why did you not speak to me, sir, and let me stop your worry, for it will be my pleasure."

"Pray allow me to give you my bank draft for the amount, and arrange it with me at your leisure."

The admiral had made a dead-center shot, and he knew it.

He would write the document for Harold Vernon, but he must be paid for it.

So he said:

"But, commodore, this is quite a large sum, fully a thousand pounds, and—"

"I will send you the draft, sir, as soon as I go to my office," was the reply.

And the noble old merchant did do so, receiving by the messenger who took it the official paper for his son.

This happy man took at once on board the Ship of Ill-Omen; and that afternoon Harold Vernon went home to dine, went back to the dear old mansion he had loved so well, and the story of his innocence was made public, and the handsome young sailor became a hero in the eyes of the very men who had been the most eager to denounce him as guilty.

CHAPTER XXXII. THE OCEAN OGRE.

THE reader has doubtless surmised that Harold Vernon, as we must now call the young lieutenant of the Ship of Ill-Omen, was right in saying that the *goleta* was under the command of the man whom the people now spoke of as Ocean Ogre.

He had, with his love of risk, boldly gone into the quarters of Admiral Fenton and gotten from him a "protection paper," as it were, should he be captured by an English vessel, mistaking him for a suspicious personage, or seized upon entering a port that belonged to the King of England.

Captain Cutlass sought to obtain this paper from sheer bravado, for he did not care for it; but he wished the old admiral to feel that he had dared visit him, and also to talk over the price set upon his own head.

When he set sail from the harbor, the pirate intended to begin at once upon his plans of merciless revenge upon his fellow-men.

He had captured a sugar-laden craft, as Harold Vernon had supposed, put the crew to death, taken the cargo on board the *goleta*, and, with his guns and four-fifths of his crew in hiding below decks, and acting as captain, he had put into the harbor of Boston.

A nice little sum in cash he had received for his valuable cargo, and a freight to carry out which would bring a good price.

Then he had bearded the admiral in his den, purchased for his vessel all that it needed, and more, had found out that the Ship of Ill-Omen was in the dock undergoing repairs, that her commander and crew had received full pardon for their services, and Lonsdale had gone east on a cruise in the Spitfire, while his traitor lieutenant, as he called Harold, was in command of the weird cruiser.

Upon this information the Ocean Ogre determined to act.

So, fearing to spoil all by an effort to get Harold into his power, he set sail, his destination being the vicinity of Sealands, where he hoped to run across the Spitfire.

He had learned to a man what force Lonsdale had on the schooner, and as his crew outnumbered him largely, and the *goleta* was not only a larger vessel, but carried a heavier battery, while she was equally as fast, if not the superior in speed of his old craft, he did not fear a combat with the Wizard of the Waves, as he had also heard Lonsdale called while in Boston Harbor.

He went out of port under easy sail, and was gliding swiftly along, when the lookout called down to the deck:

"Sail, ho!"

"Whereaway?" asked the pirate captain, tersely.

"Aster, sir."

"Coming out of port, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is she?"

"An island intervenes now, sir, but I will soon see her distinctly."

A few minutes passed, and then came:

"Ho, the deck!"

"Ay, ay."

"She is a large frigate, sir, and the one we passed at anchor as we came out."

"Ah! then she is in chase, I fear."

"Come, Senior Leon, get sail on the Whirlwind, and let us keep out of range of that frigate's guns."

The order was quickly obeyed, and when the Whirlwind had placed Deer Island astern* the frigate was just off Spectacle Island, some five miles being between pursuer and pursued.

The *goleta* shaped her course north by east, once she gained a good offing, and, under the six-knot breeze blowing, went howling merrily along.

Once the frigate had also left Deer Island, it was seen that she followed directly in the wake of the Whirlwind, and from deck to truck was a mass of canvas.

But the West Indian craft steadily gained upon her, cutting swiftly through the waters.

Once he was at sea the pirate ordered the guns to be gotten upon deck, and the crew set to work with a will.

One by one the heavy guns were brought forth from their hiding-places, beneath a false deck, and mounted in place, and the small-arms were put where they belonged.

All through the night the Coast Gipsy crew worked hard, and, just at sunrise the pretty craft was in fighting trim and her daring commander breathed more freely.

The frigate was now three leagues astern, and hull down, so they had nothing to fear from her; but, not wishing to be dogged to the neighborhood of Casco Bay, whither he was going, the Ocean Ogre held straight out to sea, determined to throw the Saturn off his track, and, when night came he would be far enough away to double on him in the darkness and head for his original destination.

How it had come about that he had been sus-

*A number of the islands in Boston Harbor a hundred years ago have disappeared, and the names of some have been changed.

pected, the pirate could not understand; but there was not the slightest doubt but that the frigate had been sent in pursuit, and he congratulated himself upon having escaped just in time, as he had no desire to risk capture a second time, for he thought the captor would prevent his escape by instantly hanging him, and in this he was not far wrong.

During the day the *goleta* dropped the frigate to a mere speck upon the horizon, and, as soon as night fell the course of the Whirlwind was changed, and her sharp bows were pointed toward Casco Bay.

"Now to find that man Lonsdale, and seek my revenge upon him, and then his sweet sister shall become my captive, for nothing shall thwart me in the game I am now playing, not even Marcelite!"

"Marcelite!"

Like an echo the name came after he had spoken it and the pirate fairly started at the distinctness with which it fell upon his ears.

Ever superstitious, he knew not what to make of it, and once more he turned his face toward the sea and spoke aloud, in about the same tone as before:

"Marcelite!"

"Marcelite!"

The echo came as before, and, with the perspiration breaking out in great beads upon his forehead, the Ocean Ogre hastily left the deck and sought the brilliantly-lighted cabin, while from his lips came the unanswerable question:

"Good God! from whence came that mysterious echo of her name?"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HAROLD VERNON SETS SAIL.

THERE was quite a stir in Boston society when the wanderer, Harold Vernon, so long accused of murder, returned once more to its charmed circle, or rather had the doors of the best citizens opened to him, for he held aloof from all.

The paper of the admiral, made public, convinced all that the young sailor had done no wrong, other than by his having fled, instead of facing the ordeal of the charge against him, and his having been forced to serve the noted pirate, the Ocean Ogre, but added romance to his strange career.

But Harold was not spoiled by the attention heaped upon him, nor by flattery.

He felt that he owed all to Lionel Lonsdale, and the knowledge that the Ocean Ogre was again on the track of his captain, and perhaps meant to capture him once more, if in his power, caused him the greatest anxiety.

The fact that the *Saturn* had started in chase of the pirate, and had not returned, did not relieve his anxiety, as he knew well what Vival Murel the Cuban Corsair was, and felt that if he was taken by a frigate, it would be one that Lionel Lonsdale and not Frank Fenton commanded.

The more he thought over the matter, the more worried he became, until at last he decided to act.

He at once sought the quarters of Major Branscombe, whom he felt that he could trust, and more, he knew that the advice of the young dragoon would be worth having.

It was night and the major's orderly said that his commander had gone to Military Hall for supper.

Thither Harold went, dressed in his handsome uniform, and yet wearing no insignia of rank, for the admiral had not yet commissioned an officer upon the *Ship of Ill-Omen*.

The major was there and Harold Vernon was greeted by many voices in welcome, as he entered, and a score of invitations were extended to him to have a glass of wine.

But the young sailor had given up the wine cup and cards, as the cause of all his misery, and declined, while he asked Major Branscombe for a few minutes' talk with him.

"I was just going to Vernon Hall, Mr. Vernon, so perhaps you will join me, as I suppose you will go home before returning on shipboard?"

"Yes, major, and I also desire to see my father upon the same subject that I seek your advice."

"How can I help you, Vernon?"

"Well, major, I am greatly worried about Captain Lonsdale."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir, for though he sailed in the *Spitfire*, he carried but fifty men with him, and I am sure that the *goleta* will go in search of him, and she has four more guns than the schooner, while Captain Cutlass will never sail without seventy in crew."

"This does look bad, should Lonsdale meet the Ogre?"

"Yes, major, and should he not, you know that the captain intended leaving Miss Lonsdale and Lurline at Sealands, and—"

"My God, yes!" and the major grew at once alarmed.

"Should the *goleta* go to Sealands, while the *Spitfire* is off cruising after Casco Corsairs, Captain Cutlass could again capture Miss Lonsdale and Lurline."

"I had not thought of that, Vernon, and I

am glad you spoke of it now, but then the *Saturn* is still away after the pirate."

"A lion in chase of a rabbit," said Harold with a sneer.

"You are right, but have you thought of anything to get Lonsdale out of trouble?"

"Yes, sir."

"Out with it."

"I can leave Mr. Manly, who was chief officer before I went on board the frigate, in charge of the *Ill-Omen*, and I can go in father's brig in pursuit, for I can take men from our vessel's crew, as they are not needed now."

"The very thing; but the brig has her skipper and crew."

"True, but I know my men, and prefer to take them, and I think father will consent."

"I think so, too; but can you get away?"

"Oh, yes, sir, for I am not a commissioned officer, only acting as such, and the admiral has nothing to do with me; but I wished to know what you thought of it, Major Branscombe?"

"I say go, by all means, for what you have suggested may occur, and it pains me to think of it; but here we are at your home."

There were fortunately no visitors at Vernon Hall, and Harold and the major were ushered at once into the library, where the commodore was sipping a glass of port and listening to his daughter read the latest news in a batch of English papers.

They were welcomed warmly, and Harold soon made known his fears regarding Lonsdale and Eve.

He received a look of warm gratitude when he asked the commodore to let him take the *Belle of Blue Water* and go in search of both the pirate and Captain Lonsdale.

The old merchant sailor at once said:

"Take her, boy, and if you cannot whip that Ocean Ogre in her, I don't want her; but I must get a permit from the admiral for her to go to sea, for you know I cannot send her on a cruise without his consent."

"Can it be gotten to-night, father?"

"Yes, for the admiral sits up late."

"I will order the carriage for you, father, so that you can drive there at once," and Eve left the room to give the order.

"Commodore, if I might suggest, sir, I would say not to tell the admiral that your son is going in command, and to take a crew from the *Ill-Omen*; but to let him believe you intend to have her go out under your own skipper, and to bring back the things which Lonsdale wished removed from Sealands, and which he asked you to send a small craft after."

"Major Branscombe, I am glad of your suggestion, for I never thought of it, and the admiral would certainly refuse to allow Harold to go, as he would be certain that he meant to turn pirate."

"Or capture a pirate, a work that was cut out for the *Saturn* to do," replied Harold with a laugh and a sly look at Major Branscombe, who said:

"By the way, Vernon, while you are out you had better look up the *Saturn*, too, and see that no harm has befallen Fenton."

All laughed at this, and soon after the commodore drove away to see the admiral.

In an hour's time he returned, and he had the permit for the *Belle of Blue Water* to sail at will of the commodore.

Two hours after, while the admiral was peacefully sleeping, the brig went to sea with Harold Vernon in command.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LIVING WITNESS.

WHEN the *Spitfire* set sail from Sealands, Lionel Lonsdale's first destination was a lonely island on the Maine Coast, situated some leagues from Castle Bleak, the home of the mysterious exile, Enrique Leslie.

He so arranged that the island hove in sight at nightfall, and, shortening sail, it was midnight when the schooner dropped anchor a mile off-shore.

A boat was lowered and in it went Lonsdale and eight men, all well armed, and silently it pulled for the shore, for the oars were muffled.

A landing was found on the lee of the island, and the party went ashore.

Two men were left to guard the boat, and Lonsdale and the others made their way into the interior of the rocky and dreary island.

As though following certain directions, Lonsdale went slowly and seemed to be trying to find a certain locality.

In a short while he beheld the glimmer of a light ahead, and he said in a low tone:

"Lads, yonder is the cabin I seek."

"There may be but one man there, and there may be a dozen."

"I will go ahead and reconnoiter, and if there is a large force, I will send back to the schooner for more men."

"Just wait here."

He glided away through the pines like a phantom, and the men waited in silence, ready to rush to the aid of their captain if necessary.

Reaching the cabin, Lonsdale found it a mere hut of logs, built under the shelter of a huge

rock, and with but a small window and door in it.

The door was partly open, and from it streamed the light he had seen from back in the pines.

As he approached he heard a growl, and a large dog lying in front of the door leaped toward him.

But the young sailor had his sword in one hand, a pistol in the other, and the dog's heart was pierced by the blade.

As he drew it forth, Lonsdale saw the door thrown open, and a man appeared, at the same time calling out:

"Ho, Nigger! What's up?"

"You are my prisoner, sir!"

At the stern tones the man sprang back into the cabin, but ere he could close the door Lonsdale was also inside, and his pistol covered the heart of the islander.

"Mr. Tony Bent, I mean you no harm, sir, unless you attempt resistance, in which case I shall kill you," said Lonsdale, calmly.

"I'm wrecked, that's certain, sir; but are you not Captain Lonsdale?" and the man gazed fixedly at him, no longer striving to get the pistol from the wall which he had reached for.

"I am, Mr. Bent, and I have come to see you."

"What does yer want with me, cap'n?" doggedly asked the man.

"I mean you no harm, as I said; but I wish to ask you some questions, and upon your answers I will act."

"Sit down, cap'n, and don't git mad with me, for I guesses I knows why you is here."

The cabin was an humble one, and yet it was by no means uncomfortable within; but it looked more like a ship's state-room than a land house.

Lonsdale sat down in a chair, and the man took another seat near him, while he asked:

"How is it, cap'n, the dog didn't hurt you?"

"His intention to do so was good, Bent, but I ran him through, as you see, with my sword; but I will pay you his value."

The man started, and said:

"Cap'n, that was a brute, but I loved him, and we've been mates for two years."

"I didn't believe a man living could get the best of that dog."

"I am sorry I had to kill him, Bent, but if I had not he would have sprung at my throat; but name his value and I will give it to you."

"I think he was worth five pounds, cap'n."

"There are five guineas; so now to business."

"Well, cap'n?"

"You remember me, as I do you, from having met at Castle Bleak, when I lay there wounded and you brought fish now and then to the woman?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Bent, I wish you to tell me when you last saw me?"

"I doesn't remember exactly, sir."

"Maybe this will refresh your memory, and if gold will not, steel I am sure will."

He handed him a dozen guineas as he spoke, and at the same time pointed significantly to his sword, when he referred to steel.

"I prefers dealing with gold, Cap'n Lonsdale, and I guesses I seen you last when you was on the cliff with Lady Lola."

"Ah! I thought that your memory would not fail you under pressure; but now tell me what you saw there?"

"I seen you land from your boat and meet her on the cliff, where she had been waiting."

"Well?"

"It looked like to me as if she were a quarreling, and then she took a knife and started to kill you."

"But you did not move and then she threw the knife down, as I recalls, and ran toward the cliff."

"I seen you start toward her, and heard you call; but she didn't stop, but jumped over into the sea."

"Well?"

"You called men from your vessel and made search for her, but she had gone under, cap'n, and that's all I knows."

"Tony Bent?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"I wish you to go with me to Castle Bleak and tell Mr. Leslie just what you saw that day."

"Oh Lordy!"

"I mean it."

"He will kill me if I does."

"I will give you fifty guineas if you will."

"But he'll kill me, cap'n, if I does."

"I'll kill you if you do not."

There was no mistaking the stern look and tone, and Tony Bent looked frightened.

"Oh cap'n!" he fairly groaned.

"Tony Bent, Mr. Leslie has publicly accused me of murdering his daughter, of throwing her from the cliff."

"I fought a duel with him, which he, coming to Boston, forced upon me."

"I spared his life, and when again attacked, ran him through the sword arm."

"He swears to have my life, and I wish you to go with me and tell him just what occurred on the cliff, as you saw it that day."

"Do this for me and I'll pay you fifty guineas."

"Refuse, and, as I know you to be a member of the Casco Corsairs I'll take you on board my vessel and string you up as such."

"Now you can take your choice."

It was evident that the man greatly feared Enrique Leslie, but he was in the man's grasp and he determined to risk the uncertainty of the master of Castle Bleak killing him, against the certainty of being hanged at the yard-arm, and so he said:

"I'll do as you say, Captain Lonsdale."

"Then come with me, sir," was the stern response, and soon after Tony Bent was in the boat on the way to the schooner.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A VISIT TO CASTLE BLEAK.

WHEN the sun arose, the morning following the visit of Lonsdale to the island home of Tony Bent, it shone upon the schooner Spitfire at anchor in the little sheltered shore near Castle Bleak.

Major Branscombe had been the one to tell Lonsdale of Tony Bent, who had been his pilot when he had visited Castle Bleak, at the time when Commodore Vernon and Belle were at Lelands by the dying bed of Mrs. Lonsdale.

The major had hoped, by visiting Enrique Leslie, to get him to retract his charge, made by letter to Admiral Fenton and to Belle Vernon that Lionel Lonsdale was the murderer of his daughter Lola.

But Enrique Leslie had not only reiterated the charge, but had allowed the gallant major to depart with the pledge of a duel with him, when his wound, given by Lionel Lonsdale permitted a hostile meeting.

In Tony Bent, the pilot picked up for the Belle of Blue Water, the major had found a living witness to the fact that Lola first made an attempt to drive a knife into the heart of Lionel Lonsdale, and, changing her mind had sprung over the cliff.

Tony had been well paid by the major to go with him to Sealands, to tell Mrs. Lonsdale that the charge against her noble son was untrue; but the brig had arrived after the death of the broken-hearted woman, and the pilot, according to promise, had been set free, and straight to his island home he had gone.

The major had suggested that Tony Bent was a spy for the corsairs of Casco Bay and the smugglers, and so Lonsdale had understood pretty well how to force him to carry out his wishes.

So it was that the man had sailed in the schooner for Castle Bleak.

Dropping anchor in the haven, Lonsdale had awaited the coming of dawn, and after breakfast he landed with Tony and Surgeon English, who had been an officer also under the Ocean Ogre when Harold Vernon was first lieutenant.

An Englishman by birth, the man became known as English, and a stout, good-natured fellow, he had been forced also to serve Captain Outlass.

A physician by profession, English had also been a sailor, and on the Ill-Omen Lonsdale had given him the berth of surgeon.

When he had sailed in the Spitfire, English had been brought along to act as both first officer and surgeon.

When he landed at Castle Bleak, therefore, Lonsdale called to English and Tony Bent to accompany him.

The former was unarmed, and the latter carried his pistols and sword.

Halting near the top of the cliff, where there was a rustic seat, Lonsdale said:

"Surgeon English, you await here with Bent, and if I need you, I will call you."

"Keep your eye upon that man, for though his temptation to remain is great, his fear of the master of the mansion back in the pines is so great he may be tempted to leave you."

"I'll watch him well, Captain Lonsdale, but if he should attempt to escape?"

"Kill him," was the cool response, and Lonsdale walked on.

Upon reaching the top of the cliff he beheld a grave.

It had at the head a stone, upon which was cut:

"TO THE MEMORY
OF
My Lost Idol,
LOLA LESLIE."

For some moments did Lionel Lonsdale stand by the grave, his head uncovered, and his eyes resting upon the lowly mound.

The one who lay beneath had rescued the little vessel he had once commanded, from being wrecked upon that iron coast, while he lay wounded in the cabin.

She had carried him to her home, Castle Bleak, back yonder in the pines, and her father, who was skilled in surgery, finding him to be the one who, years before had saved his daughter from being kidnapped, had made him his guest, and brought him back from the very shadow of the grave.

Lola's love for him, too, was remembered, and now, had he not have met Belle Vernon, he would have asked her to be his wife.

All came back to the memory of the young sailor, as he stood there, cap in hand, and head bent above the grave of poor love-mad Lola.

He shuddered as he recalled the day when he had last seen her, there on the cliff, but a few paces distant, and how, after threatening to take his life, she had sprung from the dizzy height into the sea.

"How dare you stand by the grave of the woman you killed?" came in stern tones upon the ears of the young commander of the ship of Ill-Omen.

Lonsdale started, turned and confronted Enrique Leslie.

The face of the latter was livid, his eyes blazed like a madman, and his teeth were hard set as he gazed upon the young sailor.

Lonsdale did not for an instant lose his nerve, but facing the Exile, replaced his cap and said quietly:

"I came to your house to seek you, Mr. Leslie."

"And you have the cruel heart to tarry by the grave of the one you murdered?" hissed Enrique Leslie.

He was dressed as was his wont, in the richest manner, and wore gems of great value upon his fingers, and in his shirt-front, while his knee and shoe-buckles were also studded with precious stones.

He was a handsome man, but with a face that was cold, cruel and stern.

His wound had healed, and he no longer wore his arm in a sling.

"I tarried here, yes, for I remember poor Lola only with feelings of deepest regard and gratitude."

"I recall that I owe to her, yes, and to you, Mr. Leslie, my life, for your skill in surgery brought me back from the brink of the grave."

"As I loved my sister, so looked I upon Lola; but, poor girl, her love was her all, and I feel deeply indeed that I was the one to cause her to take her own life."

"You came to Boston, Mr. Leslie, and said cruel things of me, and you forced me, by insults, to meet you."

"I disarmed you, and because I wished not to kill you, I wounded you, and most glad am I to see that you have recovered."

"Now I have come here to see you, to ask you if you will not tell me that you know that I did not cause your daughter's death, that I did not hurl her from the cliff, as you have said, and as a proof that I did not do so, that there may be no thought in your heart against me, I have brought one who can vouch for it that I tried to save Lola, for he saw all."

With low, earnest manner Lionel Lonsdale had spoken, and when he had finished the eyes of the Exile blazed like a basilisk, while he said between his teeth:

"No man can prove contrary to what I know to be the truth, Lionel Lonsdale."

"Ho, English! Come here with that man!" called out Lonsdale, in a ringing voice, and at his words Enrique Leslie started and hastily drew a pistol from his breast pocket, for he seemed to appear like a man who felt that he was being caught in a trap.

With the weapon drawn, and half-leveled at Lonsdale, he stood watching the top of the cliff path, over which now appeared Officer English and Tony Bent, hastening toward the spot.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A DUEL ACROSS A GRAVE.

After calling to Officer English to come with Tony Bent, Lionel Lonsdale calmly folded his arms and showed not an atom of dread at the hostile attitude of Enrique Leslie.

"What does this mean, sir?" cried the master of Castle Bleak, as he saw the two men approaching.

"It means you no harm, sir, for one is my lieutenant; the other you doubtless recognize as Tony Bent, who sells you fish at times?" was the quiet response.

"Yes, I know the man; but why fetch him here?"

"He shall answer for himself."

"Tony?"

"Well, sir?" answered the man, casting a glance of dread at Enrique Leslie, while he answered Lonsdale.

"I have told Mr. Leslie that I was not the cause of the death of his daughter, through any word or act of mine."

"He has disbelieved me, and knowing that you were fishing off yonder little island at the time, I wish you to tell Mr. Leslie just what you saw happen on yonder cliff the day Miss Leslie lost her life?"

"I care not to hear, sir, and you have doubtless bribed that poor wretch to tell the story you would have me hear."

Lonsdale's eyes flashed, while he said:

"Mr. Leslie, I insist that you hear the man's story, sir, and then, if you will not believe, I am wholly at your service, for you seem determined to insult me."

"But I hope you will be convinced, for I assure you, sir, I do not wish to have you feel unkindly toward me, after the debt of gratitude that I owe you."

"I will hear what he has to say."

"Speak out, sir."

Thus urged, Tony said:

"I was out that day, sir, fishing, sir, and—"

"Man, tell what you saw, not what you were doing," sternly said Mr. Leslie.

"Well, sir, I saw Cap'n Lonsdale here land from his vessel and come up the cliff path."

"Lady Lola was here and met him, and they walked toward the cliff, right yonder."

"I seen her then draw a knife from her bosom, and seem about to drive it to the heart of her cap'n."

"But ther cap'n he did not move, and then she turned and threw ther knife away and ran toward ther cliff."

"I was too far off, sir, as you sees, to hear what was said; but ther cap'n called to her, and I saw him try to catch her; but he could not, though he nearly went over himself."

"He then ran to the cove and got into his waiting boat, and looked for the Lady Lola for a long time, sir."

"But she never rose, that I could see, sir."

"That is what I saw, sir."

The master of Castle Bleak smiled grimly, and then he said, with a sneer:

"Such is your story?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much did this man give you to lie for him?"

The words were hardly uttered before Lonsdale's hand was upon the throat of the insulter, and the pistol he held was wrenched from his hand.

"Enrique Leslie, you have gone too far, sir, for by Heaven, I will meet you in deadly combat if so you will."

The voice of the young sailor rung with anger; but in an instant he was cool again, and releasing his hold upon the man he stepped back and calmly awaited reply.

The master of Castle Bleak was noted for his strength, and yet, to his amazement, he had been powerless in the grasp of Lonsdale.

He choked under the presence of the grip upon his throat, and his face had become livid.

But, released from the iron grip he had stood an instant, seemingly dazed at what had occurred, and then he had found words to reply, for he saw that an answer was expected.

"You say that you will meet me, Captain Lonsdale?"

"So I said, sir," was the calm reply.

"And you mean it?"

"I do."

"You will meet me across my daughter's grave?"

"If so you wish."

"And with pistols?"

"Yes, for weapons are immaterial to me, sir."

"It shall be with pistols then, ten paces apart, and I will be ready in a few minutes."

"One moment, please."

"Well, sir?"

"Bring one of your servants, sir, or more if you wish, for I desire witnesses other than Mr. English and the man you accuse me of having in my pay."

"I prefer not, sir."

"Then I refuse to meet you, for should you fall it will be said I was your murderer."

"Let the man Bent, act for one?"

"Not after you have said he was bribed by me to tell his story."

"No, get whom you please, a neighbor, or your servants, for without them I refuse to meet you."

"I will go for Enos, my servant."

"As you please, sir."

"Will you not come to the house with Mr. English and have a glass of wine?" was asked with a manner that showed the master of Castle Bleak meant what he said.

"No, sir, thank you, for I desire to return to my vessel for my dueling pistols," and Lonsdale bowed politely, as the Exile turned away and walked rapidly toward the stone mansion in the distance.

"Captain Lonsdale, that man is mad, and you should not risk your life before him, sir," said Officer English.

"And, cap'n, he's the best hand with sword and pistol I ever heard tell on," added Tony Bent.

"I have done my best to avoid a meeting, but to no purpose, so I will let him have his way," quietly responded Lonsdale, and he walked down the cliff path to the shore, from whence he was rowed out to the schooner.

In a short while Officer English saw him returning, and called out:

"He is coming, Captain Lonsdale!"

The young captain walked back to the grave, and said:

"Here are the weapons, English, and Mr. Leslie can have his choice, unless he prefers one of his own."

In a short while the Exile approached, his French servant, Enos, following him and carrying a small mahogany box.

"My pistols are at your service, Mr. Leslie, to select from," said Lonsdale.

"Thank you, but I prefer my own, for I know what they are."

"And I will use my own," responded Lons-

dale, as Enos held the box open for him to take his choice, at an order from his master.

"Will you load your own weapon, sir?" asked the Exile, adding:

"I intend to load mine."

"Officer English, will you kindly load one of my pistols for me?" and Lonsdale watched him as he obeyed, seeing that he put the exact charge of powder into it and wrapped the bullet in kid.

"Are you willing for Mr. English to give the word, Mr. Leslie?" asked Lonsdale.

"Yes."

"Then, gentlemen, please take your stands and let us have this matter over with," Officer English said, and he quickly paced off the distance, six paces on either side of Lola's grave.

"I will give the word as follows, gentlemen:

"One, two, three, fire!

"Between the words *one* and *fire*, you are to do so.

"Do you understand?"

Both turned and walked to their respective stations, Enos, the servant of Mr. Leslie, standing like a statue looking on, while Tony Bent stepped to one side also, and gazed upon the two duelists with deepest interest depicted upon his face.

Lonsdale wore the same calm manner, almost amounting to indifference, though a sad expression rested upon his face.

The master of Castle Bleak had an expression of intense hatred upon his face, and his eyes held that same malignant sparkle they had when he had met Lonsdale by the grave.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

The words came out in terse, professional manner.

"Ay, ay, sir," promptly responded Lonsdale, and Enrique Leslie said bluntly:

"Yes."

"One! two! three—fire!"

With the first word, *one*, Enrique Leslie threw his pistol to a level and fired.

At the report Lonsdale stepped backward, but quickly resumed his place, standing like a statue.

He did not raise his weapon, but said calmly:

"Mr. Leslie, I again give you your life, sir, for I never miss. Will you take my hand now in friendship across your daughter's grave?"

"Never!" and the word came savagely from the lips of the Exile.

Lonsdale bowed and turned away, while Officer English took up the pistol case of the young captain and followed.

"Let us hasten, English, for I am wounded," said Lonsdale, calmly, as they started down the cliff path, while the Exile stood like one who was dumb with amazement at having missed his aim, for he too knew that he was one who never missed, whose aim was as deadly as death itself.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A DUEL BY PROXY.

WHEN Lonsdale and Officer English walked away from the scene of the duel, Tony Bent had not followed them.

He had been aching to do so, for, from some reason he seemed to stand in the greatest awe of the master of Castle Bleak.

So he did not dare follow Lonsdale, and there he stood waiting for the Exile to address him, it seemed.

Enos, the servant, also remained in the same upright position which he had taken, when appearing upon the field, and the Exile, like a man gone mad, was as motionless as the stone at the head of Lola's grave.

"My God! what can it mean?"

"Does that man bear a charmed life?" he suddenly broke out with.

"I guess he does, sir," volunteered Tony Bent and the look that he got from the Exile caused him to feel sorry that he had spoken to attract attention to himself.

At last the Exile gave a deep sigh, passed his hand across his forehead and said to himself:

"How could I miss him, I wonder?"

"But did I?"

Then he stood for a few minutes in deep thought and suddenly called out:

"Enos!"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Go on board that schooner, give my compliments to Captain Lonsdale and say that I demand another meeting with him."

"Yes, monsieur."

Enos hastily descended the cliff path, and reaching the shore, sprung into one of the small skiffs belonging to the place and rowed out toward the schooner, when he was promptly hailed.

Stating that he wished to see Captain Lonsdale, as he brought a message from his master, he was told to come alongside and Officer English met him at the gangway with a stern:

"Well, sir?"

Enos delivered his message, and Officer English bade him wait while he gave it to Captain Lonsdale.

In a few minutes he returned with word:

"Captain Lonsdale bids me say that he will meet your master, if he will take him as a proxy

for Major Albert Branscombe, with whom Mr. Leslie is under pledge to fight a duel, and that swords are the weapons used."

Enos bowed and returned to his skiff, while Officer English again entered the cabin.

There sat Lonsdale, half-undressed, and with a bandage about his broad chest, for the bullet of the Exile had struck him squarely over the heart, but glancing upon a rib, had cut a gash in the flesh as it passed on through his clothing and doubtless found lodgment among the pines behind him.

The wound was a slight one, but yet for glancing on the bone, the bullet would have pierced the heart.

Officer English skillfully dressed the wound and said:

"I am sorry you agreed to meet that man again, sir."

"My dear English, he is a dangerous man to meet, both with blade and pistol, and I know not just what Branscombe can do with either, and I have no desire to have Leslie kill the major, so I offer to meet him by proxy."

"I do not wish to kill Leslie, and yet, as he is such a dead shot, I will have either to do so, or to shatter his hand to prevent his killing me, and so I said swords, for I can disarm him and spare him."

"I would not spare him again," growled English.

"I owed to his daughter my life, and my vessel and crew were saved by her from destruction."

"I owe him my life, for, but for his skill I would have died of my wound."

"I do not wish, therefore, to kill him, so shall meet him."

Soon Enos returned with word that his master would accept Captain Lonsdale as proxy for Major Branscombe, if he would again fight with pistols, for his arm was not wholly well from the wound which the captain had given him.

"All right, I will meet him," was the reply, and Lonsdale and English once more went ashore, the latter's face wearing a look of great anxiety.

The Exile bowed as they approached, but Lonsdale said decidedly:

"Mr. Leslie, if I meet you now, sir, it is to be only upon your pledge as a gentleman that I fight as proxy for Major Branscombe, and that you will not engage in a duel with him, be the circumstances what they may to bring such an affair about."

"Upon your honor do you give such pledge?"

"You refuse otherwise to meet me?"

"I do, emphatically, for I have fought my last duel with you for my own behalf, and this shall be wholly as proxy for Major Branscombe and our last meeting."

"If we both survive this and you insist upon dogging my steps, I shall look upon you as a madman and take means to have you confined as such."

There was no mistaking that Lonsdale meant all that he said, and the Exile fairly quivered with rage, and the threat seemed to terrify him as well.

When he could control himself, and which he did after a mighty effort, he said hoarsely:

"I shall stake all on this meeting, Captain Lonsdale, and ask no other; but will you answer me one question?"

"With pleasure."

"Did I not hit you when I fired?" and the man bent forward, eagerly awaiting a reply.

"You did, sir, for your bullet struck a rib over my heart, glanced and cut its way out here through my coat, as you see."

A perfect yell of delight broke from the lips of the Exile and he said with earnestness:

"I knew my aim was true."

"This time it shall be deadly."

"I am ready, sir."

Lonsdale did not change countenance at this threat: but Tony Bent who was watching him saw his lips become more stern he thought, and he muttered:

"The cap'n means to kill this time."

The two men again took their positions, as before, and Officer English once more gave his instructions about firing.

Then followed the fateful command:

"One!"

One weapon flashed on the word, and an oath broke from the lips of Enrique Leslie, as his pistol fell from his hand, the bullet of the sailor truly aimed, having struck the hammer fairly, shattering the flint* and glancing upon the iron had gone whizzing through the pines, while the severe shock had knocked the weapon from the grasp of the Exile.

"You see, Mr. Leslie, I meant not to take your life."

"Remember my warning, sir, and let not our paths cross again."

With this Lonsdale bowed and turned away, followed by English, leaving the exile trembling with rage.

Again he had been foiled, for had not Lonsdale fired as he did, he would have killed him without doubt.

* There were only flintlock pistols in those days.
—THE AUTHOR.

For a moment he stood in silence, and then he glanced at his hand.

It was not scratched even, and he said aloud:

"I am not harmed—"

"He is mistaken though, for we will meet again, our paths must come together again."

"Ah! there is a target and I will see if his shot has caused my hand to lose its cunning."

As he spoke he grasped the other pistol which Enos held, threw it forward and fired.

His aim was at Tony Bent, and without a groan the poor man sunk in his tracks.

"To-night, Enos, come here and throw that body over the cliff, and maybe you will find the gold he accepted as a bribe."

"It is easier to hurl him into the sea than to bury him."

"Now come with me," and picking up his shattered pistol the Exile walked rapidly away toward Castle Bleak, followed by the stolid Enos, who had shown no surprise at the killing of Tony Bent.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

MR. ENRIQUE LESLIE was a very angry man, after his duel with Lionel Lonsdale.

He had been certainly accommodated in all that he had asked, and yet he had failed to take the life of the man whom he appeared to hate with an intensity that was fearful.

He walked back to his elegant home, and Enos followed quickly after, not caring to break in upon his master's meditations.

Upon searching the house Enrique Leslie ordered his horse saddled, and donning a riding suit mounted and rode away at a swift pace, saying that he would not return for several days.

Hardly had he disappeared when Enos came out upon the front piazza.

His master's words about finding much money upon the body of Tony Bent had excited his curiosity and cupidity.

Like a statue, or automaton in the presence of his master, Enos had a mind of his own when alone.

His mind now was not of delay in seeing just what a search of Tony Bent's body would pan out.

"He said wait until night; but I fear some hunter or fisherman might stroll that way."

"Maybe one of the servants here might walk down to the cliff."

"I guess I won't wait any longer, for it has been two hours already since he was killed."

So saying Enos struck off in the path leading to the cliff, and distant several hundred yards.

He reached the pine grove that grew upon the cliff, and soon halted at the spot where he had seen the poor wretch fall.

But a stain of blood on the rocky ground alone remained.

The body was not there.

Enos gave a cry of fright and anger commingled.

He rushed to the cliff and gazed over into the harbor.

The schooner was not there.

She also had gone.

He gazed about him over the waters, and saw the vessel going slowly along among the islands out to sea.

A glass was always kept in a box on the cliff and seizing it Enos leveled it at the schooner.

"No, Captain Lonsdale is at the helm, and not Tony, as I supposed."

"The master surely killed him."

"He never misses, though he more than met his match in that handsome American captain."

"But where is Tony Bent?"

"He has gone, that is certain."

"But I dare not tell the master he did not kill him, for he will be so furious that he will kill me, I am afraid."

"I will say nothing about it, unless he asks me, and then I shall simply say I found no money on the body."

"He'll think it is a lie; but I can do nothing more."

"Now where has Tony gone?"

"Holy Saints! can the dead walk off?"

"There are strange things happening now, and I guess I'll not come down this way after dark, for I might meet Tony's spirit, or Miss Lola's."

"Now see that schooner?"

"Where can she be going, for she is heading along the coast to the eastward."

"Wonder if her captain is hunting for Coast Corsairs."

"Well, that's the way to find them if he is."

So Enos stood on the cliff, talking to himself. He watched the Spitfire until she was out of sight, slowly gliding along among the islands, and then he was about to turn away when his eyes fell upon another sail.

The craft was coming eastward, and before a very stiff breeze, though there was little wind inshore.

"Why that's a West Indian craft, for she's a lateen-rig," said Enos, as the vessel drew nearer.

Watching her attentively, he saw the strange vessel head inshore, and then change her course so as to run along the coast toward Casco Bay.

"That must be a buccaneer, for these lateen rigs are not seen here, and she has come for no good, I guess."

"I wish she had come in sight while the schooner was near enough to see her, for there would have been a fight, or I don't know Captain Lonsdale, though the West Indian is a larger craft, and her decks are full of men."

"I wish the master was here to see her, for he would know all about her."

As the lateen-rig disappeared in the distance, Enos again started to return to the mansion, for the sun was drawing near the western horizon.

But again his eyes fell upon a sail.

"Why, the sea is full of them to-day, for yonder is another craft."

"And she heads this way too."

After awhile he said:

"It's a brig, and she's armed too."

"Wonder what she can be."

"I only wish the schooner, the lateen-rig and the brig had met here together, for I'd enjoy seeing a good fight."

"Now that brig is coming straight here, so what can she want?"

"There must be something out of the common going on, to fetch those three vessels here so near together—Hal! that was thunder!"

"There is going to be a storm, that is certain, and yonder craft better go back out to sea, unless she has some one on board who knows these waters."

"But I can soon tell if she has a pilot, when she gets nearer."

"And the lateen-rig, and the schooner better look out too, unless they have pilots."

"Captain Lonsdale knows the waters about here, I know, for he sailed over them with Lady Lola; but does he know the coast further down?"

"This is a bad year along this coast for vessels in good weather, and in a blow it is death."

"The storm is rising and night is coming on."

"Why, that brig is running toward the Horse-shoe for an anchorage, thinking the lee of this land will be a safe harbor."

"But it was just there Captain Lonsdale's schooner lay the time Lady Lola went out and acted as pilot, into the harbor here under the cliff."

"It's the worst place a craft could find, and she is doomed."

"Yes, I see her colors—and she is British, but her doom is sealed, for I am no sailor to save her, and no one else can, now Tony Bent is dead—if he is dead."

"Yes, the brig has run under the lee of the island and dropped anchor, and in the morning I will find good picking from the corpses that come ashore."

"There comes the storm, and the night is here also."

"I must run for it," and away Enos darted for the mansion, just as the lightning and thunder flashed and rolled appallingly, and darkness settled upon sea and land.

CHAPTER XXXIX. THE STRANGE PILOT.

WHEN Lionel Lonsdale left the cliff, after his second duel with Enrique Leslie, he returned to his schooner, accompanied by Officer English.

He had wished to have Tony Bent go with him; but he did not wish to bring the anger upon him of the master of Castle Bleak, by telling him so, and having paid him his money he had promised, he said nothing to him.

After boarding the schooner he gave orders to get under way, and hoped that Tony Bent would yet come out before the vessel sailed.

But as he did not, he would wait no longer for him, for he did not know what the shot fired after his departure meant.

Had he known that the master of Castle Bleak had deliberately shot down the man who had told what he had seen, as to the actions of Lola Leslie, Lonsdale would have instantly returned and arrested Enrique Leslie as a murderer.

As to the waters about Castle Bleak, the young captain knew them fairly well, and, suspecting that he might be able to find the haunts of the Coast Corsairs further along the shore, he had headed in that direction, taking the helm himself and going along under very light sail, for he well knew the dangers that beset him.

As night approached and he got beyond the locality where his knowledge of the waters extended, he sought to find an anchorage, or to get out to sea.

But the wind died out, and a storm was threatening, so he knew that his only chance was to seek the lee of an island and there drop both anchors, thus trying to ride out the tempest.

So an island was reached, by towing with the boats, and as safe an anchorage as could be found under the circumstances was selected.

The topmasts were then housed, both anchors let fall, and the schooner was put in the best condition to meet the tempest, which threatened to be a severe one.

As night drew near, Lonsdale, though suffering from his wound, for the shock had been a severe one, remained on deck, anxious about his vessel.

He knew that the coast was a deadly one, and

he remembered how, when in command of a little coast cruiser some years before, and while lying wounded in his cabin it was, that Lola Leslie had come out and saved the vessel from wreck.

Seated in an easy-chair upon the deck, he watched the settling down of the night, and the coming of the tempest, which he saw was going to strike with great fury.

The crew also realized their danger, and yet, the wind failing them, it had been impossible to get out from the shore into good sea room.

Officer English paced the deck near his commander, and his usually jolly face was overshadowed with the dread of coming evil.

"Captain Lonsdale, there is a skiff coming off to us, sir," said Officer English, who was occasionally sweeping the waters with his glass.

"Indeed! it must be a pilot then, though I had no idea of finding one on this coast."

"I see him," and the captain arose and glanced out over the darkening waters.

It was a white skiff, long and narrow, and she was coming across the broad expanse of waters between the island where the schooner lay and the mainland.

There were islets here and there, and sunken reefs to break the scene, and these were the dangers which the schooner had to fear.

Nearer and nearer came the skiff, flying along under a small sprit-sail, for the wind was blowing fresh.

The night was now falling upon the scene, and but a glimmer of the little boat could be seen, but she was heading directly for the schooner at anchor in the cove.

The thunder now came in bursts like the broadside of a frigate, and the lightning suddenly began to flash with blinding brightness.

All knew that the storm must soon strike, but the coming boat would reach them first.

In a few minutes more there came a hail:

"Schooner ahoy!"

"Ahoy, the boat!" answered officer English.

"Get up your anchor and set storm-sails, for you will be destroyed where you now are."

"Are you a pilot?"

"Yes, and will run you to a harbor."

"Ay, ay, sir," and orders were at once given to the crew, who sprung nimbly to their work.

A few moments more, and the skiff ran alongside of the schooner, strong arms seized the occupant and dragged him on board, while his boat, at his order, was taken astern and attached by a long line, he having lowered and furled his tiny sail.

"You are a pilot, sir?" said Captain Lonsdale, as the man came aft, a tall man, stoutly built, and with a heavy beard and long hair.

"I am a coast man, sir, and know these waters well, and seeing your danger, ran out to save you."

"It was noble of you, my man, and you shall be well remembered."

"The schooner is in your hands, so give your orders."

The anchors were now up, and with storm-sails set, the schooner swung around to the breeze and started out of the cove, the little skiff towing astern.

"You will lose your skiff, I fear, when the storm strikes us; but you shall have double its value," said Lonsdale.

"No, the skiff is all right, sir," was the reply, and the pilot took the wheel.

As the schooner swept out of the harbor, the storm was seen sweeping down upon them with terrific fury, and in another moment must strike the little vessel.

"Ho, captain! Is not that a sail driving down upon us?"

The words were uttered by the pilot, and Lonsdale and English both sprung to the quarter to gaze out over the sea.

Hardly had they done so when the pilot suddenly drew a hatchet from his breast, and in an instant the tiller-ropes were cut, and seizing the tow-line of the skiff, he sprang into the sea over the stern of the schooner, while he shouted:

"Lionel Lonsdale, I have avenged my daughter, for your craft is doomed!"

A cry of horror broke from the crew, and even the stout heart of Lionel Lonsdale was appalled for a moment.

"It is the Exile, Leslie," came from his lips as English sprung to his side.

But the schooner was now unmanageable, the storm was upon her, and, seized in the teeth of the tempest, in a minute more she was dragged on to her doom!

CHAPTER XL.

A BRAVE RESOLVE.

WHEN Lionel Lonsdale left Sealands, Eve set to work with a will to get matters all ready by the time he returned.

In this she was ably seconded by Lurline, to whom she had become greatly attached.

As her brother had told Eve that war with England at an early day was inevitable, she had decided to pack up the furniture and carry it to Boston to put in a house there, as Sealands Mansion, in case of trouble between the colonies and Great Britain, would doubtless be visited by both parties, and perhaps burned to the ground.

The four seamen whom Lonsdale had left to help her, and Brandywine, the huge negro, did their work well, and within a few days all was in readiness for removing, and the two girls were "camping out," as they expressed it, while awaiting the return of the schooner.

They were seated one afternoon, Eve and Lurline, upon the broad piazza, gazing out over the island-studded bay, when a vessel appeared in the distance, coming slowly down the coast.

"It is the schooner," said Lurline.

"No, that is not the schooner, for see, her rig is far different, as you can now get a glimpse of her while she heads to round yonder island," responded Eve, and she went for her glass.

In a short while she returned, and, after a close look through it at the strange sail, she said:

"Lurline, I never saw a craft like that in these waters before."

Lurline took a peep through the glass and remarked:

"It is just like the little vessel at the pirates' island, and which they called a *goleta*."

"Yes, she is lateen-rigged, yet larger than the pirates' *goleta*."

"But what can she be doing in these waters, I wonder?"

Then the two watched the vessel as she came slowly along, and at last, from the way she headed it was certain that she sought a haven along the coast somewhere.

"Lurline?"

"Yes, Eve."

"I don't like the looks of that vessel."

"Nor I, but it is doubtless because it revives unpleasant memories of that Ocean Ogre."

"Perhaps; but let me see if I can make out her colors, for they are flying at the peak of that large lateen mizzen sail."

In a short while Eve, who was a splendid sailor, and versed in the flags of all nations said:

"Lurline, she flies the Spanish flag, and is armed."

"Doubtless she is some Spanish vessel-of-war."

"I guess so, Eve, for a pirate would not be in these waters."

"So I think; but do you hear that low rumbling sound?"

"Yes, a gun at sea, is it not?"

"No."

"What then?"

"It is thunder."

"The sky is perfectly clear."

"Yes, but a storm is brewing, I feel it in the air."

"I yield to your superior knowledge, for that surely is thunder, and it is growing louder."

"Yes, and yonder craft had better get out to sea with all haste."

"Is she not safe there?"

"No, indeed, for our harbor is the only one where she can lie in safety, for leagues along the coast, and if the wind sweeps up here from the south, she will find no refuge."

"Not under the lee of some of these islands?"

"No, indeed, for the waters in this bay become a perfect caldron in a storm, and no vessel would be safe."

"What can she do?"

"Go out to sea at once."

"Why not run into Sealands Harbor?"

"She could not do it without a pilot."

"Ah!"

"And see, they hear the thunder and are trying to go to sea now."

The course of the craft was changed, and she stood seaward.

But she moved very slowly, for the wind had nearly died out.

"She can never make it, for hark! how rapidly the storm approaches," and the thunder grew louder and louder.

Then the sky began to get overcast, and the wind increased.

But it headed the vessel off, and seeing that he could not beat out to sea, her skipper ran for the lee of an island.

"Oh! I wish I had not sent Brandywine to town," cried Eve.

"Why, Eve?"

"He knows these waters as well as Leo does, almost, and he could run out and pilot that craft into the Haven."

"And the four seamen?"

"You forget that they all went to town in the wagon with Brandywine."

"Ah, yes; but do you think the vessel will be lost?"

"Yes, for she is in the worst place she could have selected along the coast, and this storm approaching is a fearful one."

"Oh, Eve! is there no fisherman, no one who could save the poor vessel?"

Eve sprung to her feet and cried:

"Yes, I can!"

"You?"

"Yes, and I will."

"What would you do, Eve?"

"Go out to yonder vessel in my skiff and pilot her into the Sealands haven."

"You shall not go alone."

"Dare you go with me, Lurline?"

"Yes, I will gladly risk what you will, Eve, to save the lives of those brave men."

"Then come on, for there is no time to lose—"

may, do not stop for hat or wrap, but come, as we may be too late."

She bounded away as she spoke, Lurline following her, and down to the shore of the little harbor they went.

Eve's own pretty skiff was there, a surf-boat, and springing into it she seized the oars, while Lurline took the tiller.

Then with strong strokes she sent the light craft flying out of the harbor for the long pull of half a league to the strange craft lying under the lee of the island in apparent security.

CHAPTER XLI.

FOR HUMANITY'S SAKE.

It was a race between the coming storm and the little boat as to which should first reach the vessel.

But Eve had been raised upon the sea, almost, and could sail a boat and row as well as any coaster.

She was utterly fearless, and she had a nerve that would not allow her to fail where strength and courage could win.

She saw that she could reach the schooner before the storm, if she sacrificed herself, and she determined to do all that her strength and will could do.

Lurline steered the boat well, for she was an old sea captain's daughter, and had been brought up to understand boating.

And so the light skiff bounded on its way, while the wind grew harder and harder, and the waves became larger and larger.

Standing upon the deck of the vessel were three men in officers' dress, watching the boat, while the crew forward were also gazing with interest upon the plucky maidens.

The three officers had been watching the coast as they came slowly along, and one of them had his glass constantly at his eye.

As he saw the storm coming on he had headed for the lee of the island, as the only course he could pursue, for he could not beat out to sea in time.

He hoped that the island would break the force of the tempest, and prove to have a safe anchorage under its lee.

Still he felt anxious, for he well knew the dangers of that coast, and he had no pilot on board.

As the maidens ran from the piazza across the lawn he had seen them, and soon after had caught sight of the skiff coming out.

His glass revealed that those in the skiff were not men, a pilot, coming off, as he had hoped; but the two maidens he had seen run down to the shore of the little haven which was so securely sheltered from all storms.

The officer who had so attentively regarded the little skiff, at last said:

"Senor Leon, that skiff contains the very one whom I came here to seek."

"Ah! Captain Cutlass, you mean your former captive?"

"Yes, and the one at the tiller is the one who was with her, and whom I captured by mistake for Miss Vernon."

"What can bring them off here, sir, right into your hands?"

"I will tell you what does."

"Yes, senor."

"Humanity."

"I don't understand."

"Miss Lonsdale is the one at the oars, and the other is the one I kidnapped for Miss Vernon, and who is, I believe, a companion of that lady, or in other words, the daughter of an old sea captain, who lost his fortune, and so Miss Vernon took her for half-maid, half-friend, to give her a home."

"Yes, senor."

"Now, I learned in Boston that Miss Lonsdale had taken a great fancy to the young girl, since their captivity together on my vessel, and at the island, and, Miss Lonsdale's mother having died, she took the maiden as a companion, and she accompanied her here."

"Lonsdale was to leave them here, as I understood it, while he went on a cruise, and returned for them."

"Now he is not in the harbor, or we would see the schooner's masts, and the girls are at the mansion alone, and, seeing that we were in danger, and I guess we are, from their coming, Miss Lonsdale, for humanity's sake, is coming out to run us to some safe harbor."

"She cannot suspect us, then?"

"Oh, no, for our flag deceives them."

"But see how splendidly she pulls, and she has kept that mighty stroke up since leaving the harbor."

The skiff was now not very far away, and Leon remarked:

"Captain, if we are in danger, and Miss Lonsdale discovers who you are, may she not refuse to save the ship?"

"You are right, Leon, so you play captain."

"But she knows me, too, senor."

"Again you are right; here, Senor Monon, you are to play captain, for those ladies know Leon and myself."

"Come into the cabin with me and put on my coat, and call two of the Spaniards among the crew, Leon, to get into your and Monon's hats

and coats," cried the Ocean Ogre, and he ran into the cabin.

As the young officer, Monon, came on deck, the skiff ran alongside, and he sprang to the gangway and aided Eve and Lurline on board.

It was now twilight, and Eve beheld before her a handsome, dark-faced young man, to whom she quickly said:

"Your vessel will be wrecked here, sir, so I came out to pilot you into the little harbor near my home yonder."

"You have no time to lose."

Monon bowed, and in broken English, for he was a Mexican by birth, thanked Eve and Lurline properly, and then ordered the anchor gotten up and sail set.

As the Whirlwind swung off before the stiff breeze, and shot out from under the lee of the land the storm was upon her, striking with terrible force.

For a moment it seemed that she must go over under the pressure, but she rose splendidly, and with two men at the wheel, and Eve near them, directing their course, the vessel bounded forward through the tempest.

Running well under the land, Eve avoided the greatest fury of the storm, and guided by the vivid and incessantly flashing lightning, she ran through the dangerous channel directly for the haven of Sealands.

Lurline clung to the taffrail near her, while Monon held on to Eve, so that she could keep close to the helmsmen.

After a fierce struggle of twenty minutes, the gallant craft ran in though the narrow channel and was safe in the Sealands harbor.

Sail was at once taken in, the anchor was let fall, and a cheer broke from the crew for the fair pilot who had come to their aid.

In the cabin Vival Murel and Leon were together, both most anxious for the safety of their vessel in the fearful tempest.

But Monon showed himself a good officer, under the trial he had, and played his part of captain well, and the pirate chief and his first lieutenant drew a long breath of relief, when they felt that the Whirlwind was safe.

That they would have gone to the bottom, but for Eve, they knew, after seeing what they would have had to face, and Leon said eagerly:

"She is a noble woman, Captain Cutlass."

"Yes, and I love her far more for her courage, that has saved us."

"Now we will have them come into the cabin, and I know that their surprise will be great," and hailing the deck, Captain Cutlass said:

"Senor Menon, invite the ladies down into the cabin, until the storm blows over."

"Come, senoritas, come into the cabin until the storm blows over," said Menon.

"I would prefer to go at once ashore, senor," said Eve.

"Ah! there comes the rain in torrents, so you must wait," and the young pirate ushered them hastily into the cabin.

As they entered it Eve saw one person there. It was Captain Cutlass, in his best uniform, and he was alone, for Leon had disappeared.

"Senoritas, I welcome you once more as my guests."

As he spoke the Ocean Ogre turned and confronted the two girls, whose determination to save their fellow-beings from death had led them into the spider's web.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SATURN'S RETURN.

WHEN the Saturn started in chase of the lateen-rig, which Harold Vernon had written to Admiral Fenton was a pirate craft, with the Ocean Ogre on board, Frank Fenton had every hope of capturing her.

He knew that the Saturn was a very fast frigate, and he hoped to be able to overhaul the *goleta*.

As he flew out of the harbor under full pressure of canvas, he began to see in his mind's eye the vast riches which the *goleta* had on board, and he meant to hang Captain Cutlass and his officers at once to the yard-arm, so that there would be no chance for future escape.

The treasure found on board would be his, the *goleta* would bring considerable prize-money, and he would have the fame of having captured and hanged the Ocean Ogre.

It was therefore a blow to his bright anticipations, when Lieutenant Latimer, his first luff, broke in upon his reveries with:

"She is dropping us, sir."

More sail was crowded upon the frigate, but with the same result, the *goleta* steadily leaving her astern.

But the Saturn held on all during the day that followed, and until night came on and she lost sight of the vessel, which was leagues ahead.

The next day, and the next, Frank Fenton cruised the seas trying to find the lost *goleta*.

But he was unable to do so, and it put him in very ill humor to have to give up his hopes of fame and riches.

Determined not to at once return to port, and anxious to find some prize to carry back, and thus redeem himself, the young captain cruised along the coast toward Halifax, and then came back toward Portland.

As he was off the Maine Coast he suddenly sighted a sail, and a close examination found it to be none other than the armed brig Belle of Blue Water.

"Why that is old Vernon's brig, and we left her in port," said Frank Fenton in surprise.

"Yes, Captain Fenton, it surely is the Belle of Blue Water," remarked Lieutenant Latimer.

"And she is running from us, as I live."

This was true, for the brig had suddenly squared away, at sight of the frigate, as though fearing her.

"Fire a shot over her, Latimer, to show that we wish to speak her."

This was done, and the brig came to.

Half an hour after, at the command of the frigate's captain, Harold Vernon boarded the Saturn.

Captain Fenton of course knew the history of the young fugitive officer, and had been sorry at his return home.

But he was the brother of Belle Vernon and he always had been anxious to treat him with marked consideration.

As Frank Fenton saw Harold Vernon now come on board, where he had expected to see the brig's own captain, his face flushed, for he remembered that he had come to sea in search of the Ocean Ogre on information furnished by the young lieutenant of the Ship of Ill-Omen.

"Ah! Vernon, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure; but how is it that I find you in command of the brig?" and Captain Fenton held out his hand, and assumed a joy he did not feel at meeting the acting lieutenant of the weird frigate.

"I wrote your father, Captain Fenton, that the *goleta*, which had been in port for some days, was about sailing, and that I had information that convinced me she was a pirate craft, with the Cuban Corsair, Murel, as her commander."

"Can this be possible?" cried Frank Fenton, with well feigned surprise.

"Yes, sir, it is true, and not receiving any command from your father to go in chase, I secured my father's vessel here, put men on board of her from the Ill-Omen, and came in pursuit."

"You surprise me; but we came out of port astern of the *goleta*, and, as she seemed steering my way, we followed, and she dropped us astern, for she is very fast."

"When was this, Captain Fenton?"

"Some days ago."

"And which way did she head?"

"Out to sea, for we cruised northward afterward, and I was now on my way back to Boston, hoping to pick up a prize on the way; but you started to run from us, at first, Vernon?"

"Yes, sir, for you showed no colors."

Harold Vernon made his excuse at random, and it was received in good faith, for Captain Fenton replied with a laugh:

"Ah, yes, and you had no desire to be captured by a Frenchman, so determined to show your heels."

"Of course I would give a foe a wide berth, Captain Fenton; but if you will pardon me now I will return on board the brig, as I am anxious to find the Ocean Ogre, for I think he means no good in coming to these waters."

"Lonsdale is also cruising about here, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; but his sister and Miss Lurline Liston are at Sealands, and Captain Cutlass may take a notion to visit them."

"You are right; but will you not accept my hospitality, Mr. Vernon?"

"Thank you, no, sir, for I am anxious to be off."

"Well, I will keep near you, so if you need aid, I will be ready to help you."

Harold Vernon thanked the young captain, and departed.

But he knew the part he was playing, having seen the admiral's letter to him, telling him to go to sea in chase of the *goleta*.

He despised him for it, too, yet allowed him to believe that he was deceived.

"As to your keeping near me, Captain Fenton, I hardly think you will, if I can have it otherwise," he said to himself as he rowed back to the Belle of Blue Water.

That night, in some mysterious way, the lookout on the Saturn lost sight of the brig, and when dawn came she was nowhere to be seen.

Frank Fenton was furious, for he had expected Harold Vernon to find the pirate craft, when he intended to aid in the capture and claim all the honor.

Unable to find the brig or the pirate, and with no chance of a prize, Captain Fenton ordered the Saturn's course laid for Boston Harbor.

That night there was a fearful storm, and the frigate lost some of her canvas, her maintopmast and some spars, while a gun broke loose and went through the bulwarks into the sea, carrying two seamen with it.

Soon after a mighty wave swept the decks, and several more seamen were swept away to death.

But the gallant ship rode out the fierce tempest, and the next afternoon sailed into Boston Harbor.

As she was sighted coming up to her anchorage, and it could be seen that she had suffered

some damage, it was rumored about that she had been in a hot engagement and sunk her enemy, as there was no prize along.

But it soon became known that the elements alone had been her foe, and that she had returned without a battle or a prize.

CHAPTER XLIII. A RIVAL'S PLOT.

THE old admiral was on the *qui vive* when he heard the *Saturn* was coming up the harbor.

"Got a prize with her, orderly?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know?"

"None reported, sir."

"No other sail in sight?"

"No, sir."

"Go and find out."

The admiral impatiently awaited the return of the orderly.

"Well, sir?"

He sharply asked the question as the man returned, and with the air of one who could say:

"Well, sir, I told you so."

"There is no other sail in sight, sir."

The admiral mentally cursed.

"How far off is the frigate, sir?"

"Off Spectacle Island, sir."

"And she looks as though she had been in action, sir," the man added, hoping to please the admiral.

"Ha! is she cut up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Much?"

"Well, sir, a topmast is missing, and there is a large hole stove in her bulwark to starboard sir."

"Then he has had a desperate battle."

"I heard, sir, that she had, and that she had sunk a French frigate, sir."

"I knew it, I felt it! but why the deuce didn't you say so before, sir?"

"I just heard it, sir."

"But how does any one know?"

"I don't know, sir."

Nor did the admiral, and though he hoped that the news was true, he yet could not see how any one could have discovered it if it was.

So he waited impatiently for the coming of his son.

At last that worthy arrived, and a glance at his face was not cheering to the admiral.

"You are back again, Frank?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well?"

"I didn't catch the pirate, sir."

"Why?"

"He outpaced me."

"I thought your frigate was fast?"

"She is; but the *goleta* is faster."

"I see; but where were your guns?"

"I did not get within range."

"Too much delay in starting."

"No, sir; but the *goleta* sailed like a witch, and though I followed him for twenty-four hours he got away."

"But you met a French frigate?"

"No, sir, I had no such good fortune."

"How is it your vessel is reported damaged?"

"In the storm two nights ago."

"Ah, yes, it was a fearful one."

"I lost my maintopmast, several spars, some sails, and a gun breaking away from its lashings went through the side overboard, carrying two men, while a wave swept off others."

"You were fortunate to save the ship."

"So I thought, sir, for it was as fearful a storm as I ever encountered."

"And you saw no French merchantmen?"

"No, sir."

"And met no vessels?"

"Ah, yes, I met the brig."

"What brig?"

"The commodore's brig, *Belle of Blue Water*."

"Ah, yes, she has gone to Sealands to bring back the furniture and traps for Lonsdale and his sister."

"She has gone after the *goleta*."

"No!"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know it?"

"I met her, and she started to run, thinking I was a French frigate at first; but a gun brought her to, and Harold Vernon boarded me, and—"

"What was he doing on board?"

"He was her captain, and he had a crew from the *Ill-Omen* on board."

"Whew!"

"Didn't you know it, sir?"

"I only knew that I told Vernon he could send the vessel after Lonsdale's traps; but I supposed she was going under her old skipper and crew."

"This looks bad, sir."

"I don't understand it, my son."

"Father?"

"Well?"

"Harold Vernon is an American."

"What of that?"

"So is Lonsdale."

"I know it."

"And Commodore Vernon?"

"Well?"

"Lonsdale's crew are true as steel to him."

"Yes."

"And the prisoners were mostly Americans, while the pirates are nothing."

"What are you driving at, boy?"

"I believe there is plotting going on against the king."

"But how?"

"Lonsdale is off in the schooner, Vernon has the brig, and the *Ill-Omen* ship is undergoing thorough repairs, and she'll get out of port soon, and you will find that the Colonists will have the nucleus of a navy."

The admiral sprung to his feet, and it was evident that he was deeply moved by his son's words.

Could it be that a plot against the king was going on under his very eyes?

"Frank, I cannot believe what you would have me, for Commodore Vernon is no man to act treacherously, nor is Lonsdale, and I hope young Vernon is not."

"The truth is, Lonsdale has gone on a cruise, for he is no one to stay in port idling, and, as I paid no attention to young Vernon's note, he simply went to sea in the hope of capturing the pirate *goleta*, but I hope he did not know you were aware that the craft was a buccaneer?"

"No, indeed, sir, for I deceived him there."

"I am glad of that; but where did you leave him?"

"He left me, I think intentionally, in the night, for I told him I would keep near him, to be of service in case he needed me."

"I see, and he dodged you, for he cared not to share the honors, if he captured the pirate, with a frigate's commander."

"Well, father, you are utterly 'blind; but I will prove to you yet that Lonsdale is a traitor to the king."

"Do this and I shall hang him," was the stern response.

"I'll open your eyes soon; but do you not think you should censure Commodore Vernon for not telling you his son was going to take the brig out?"

"No, for I owe him too much to pick a quarrel with him, my son, and it might end too, all your hopes of marrying his daughter."

"I will have hope again of winning her, when Lonsdale is out of the way," and so saying Frank Fenton left the admiral's quarters and wended his way toward the Military Hall, muttering as he went along:

"I will prove Lonsdale a traitor to the king yet, and when I do he will hang for it, for once the admiral believes him guilty, he will swing him up without a trial."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE EXILE'S REVENGE.

WHEN Enrique Leslie rode away from his home of Castle Bleak, that morning, after his duel with Lionel Lonsdale, he had no idea that he was to so soon get a chance to secure the revenge he sought against the man he so hated.

He was accustomed to go off on these pilgrimages on horseback, and sometimes he would be gone days at a time.

Where he went no one seemed to know, and it was said that he merely rode for days through the country, just to pass away his time.

He was well mounted, and he was a fine horseman, and he went along at a canter, after leaving his home.

The path he took was down the coast, following the ridge that ran back from the shore.

At noon he stopped at a lonely farm-house for dinner, and again went on his way until near sunset he came out upon a point of land that overlooked the sea.

He started, as his eyes fell upon a vessel a league away.

"It is the schooner for all I am worth!" he cried.

Taking a glass from his saddle-bags, he dismounted and turned it upon the vessel.

"Yes, it is his schooner, and if I had guided her there, she could not be in a worse place to be caught in the storm."

"After all I may get my revenge."

For a long time he stood gazing at the schooner, which was slowly feeling her way along through the dangerous waters and heading for an island.

He is seeking shelter under yonder island, and he can ride it out there, blow it ever so hard.

"He seems born for luck, Lionel Lonsdale does."

"But why should he remain there?"

"Can I not wreck him?"

"By the Lord above, I can, and I will!"

He ran to his horse, sprung into the saddle and dashed along the ridge until he came to a path leading down to the shore. Down this he rode at a pace that was dangerous, and putting his horse to full speed when he reached the sandy shore he soon drew rein at the door of a small hut perched among the rocks.

"Ho, Kit, I want your boat to go out to yonder craft," he said eagerly to a man who sat on a bench in front of the little cabin, and who had seemed surprised at the hasty coming of the Exile.

"All right, sir, I'll get her ready for you."

"And Kit, have you not some life-preservers I can put on, for I may be upset?"

"There's my oil-suit, sir, and you know I blow it up with quills, for it is double lined."

"I'll put it on," and the Exile soon donned the heavy, awkward suit, and it gave him the appearance of being a large, stout man.

He also drew on a pair of heavy boots, took the fisherman's hat, and then from his saddle-bags drew a false beard and wig, which he drew on, completely concealing all identity of himself; then he took a small hatchet sharp as a razor and thrust it in his coat out of sight.

"Look after my horse, Kit, until I come back."

"Yes, sir; but there is going to be a bad storm, sir."

"I see that; but I will get along all right."

"The skiff is ready, sir, and she'll float through any sea, never fear, sir."

The Exile entered the little skiff, and seizing the oars pulled out from the cove.

The schooner lay in an anchorage that was safe, but the Exile had made up his mind to play a bold game to wreck her.

That he successfully played his game, by causing the schooner, believing him to be an honest pilot, to leave her anchorage, has been seen.

Having cut the tiller-ropes, and making known who he was, he sprung into the sea and at once drew his skiff toward him with the long rope he had in his hand.

To drag himself over the bows into the skiff was an instant's work, and seizing his oars, he sent his little boat flying toward the island.

He had barely reached its lee when the storm struck with all its fury, and he beheld the schooner hurled on her beam-ends by its force, and driven with lightning velocity directly before the tempest.

"In five minutes she will strike the reefs," he cried aloud, in great glee.

Then, above the roar of the tempest came to his ears a fearful crash, mingled with the cries of men in mortal agony and despair.

"Ha! ha! ha! I have my revenge," laughed the man, and defying the storm, he rowed his little skiff out from the island's lee, as though to return to the hut on the mainland.

But the fury of the tempest convinced him that it was madness to make the attempt, and he was glad to get back to shelter again, after a fearful struggle to do so.

After an hour of raging the storm swept over, the winds blew themselves out, and unheeding the rough waters, the Exile started for the mainland.

It was a hard pull, but he reached the cove at last, and the man met him as he sprung ashore.

"The schooner was wrecked, sir."

"Yes, she broke from her anchorage, and I guess you can find valuable wreckage in the morning."

"But get my horse, Kit."

"Won't you stay all night, sir?"

"No, I must be off; and do not speak of seeing me here."

"No, sir."

Throwing off the fisherman's suit, the Exile mounted his horse and rode back along the shore and up the steep pathway to the ridge.

Then he went on at a gallop, and just at dawn awakened his servants by dashing up to the door of Castle Bleak.

"What's up?" mused Enos, as he let his master into the house, and he was alarmed for fear that something had gone wrong through the unexpected return of the master of Castle Bleak.

CHAPTER XLV.

UNLOOKED-FOR SUCCESS.

THE brig which Enos had seen, from the cliff near Castle Bleak, had gone to an anchorage under the lee of an island, which certainly was nothing more than a death-trap for the vessel's crew.

The coast of Maine is so studded with islands, and its bold shores so broken, that when a storm sweeps along it, the whole waters become a foaming caldron, and an anchorage of safety can seldom be found.

What would seem a haven of refuge to an experienced sailor, would, in a tempest, be more dangerous than the open waters, for the sweeping waves would be hurled back from island, reefs and mainland, and, fretted by the tide and winds, become a chaos into which a large ship would be but as a straw in a whirlpool.

A few of the inner, land-locked coves and inlets were safe; but without an experienced pilot these were not to be found.

It was thus that Harold Vernon, in command of the *Belle of Blue Water*, was deceived, when he sought an anchorage in sight of the cliffs of Castle Bleak.

He had purposely shaken the frigate off, by putting out his lights and suddenly lowering sail, so that the brig was under bare

poles, and the crew of the *Saturn* could not understand what had become of her.

Once the frigate had disappeared in the distance, Harold Vernon had reset sail and then had gone on his cruise, glad at being untrammelled by the presence of Frank Fenton.

He knew well just why the captain wished to keep near him, and he knew that he had tried to deceive him about his having put to sea.

So Harold Vernon's vessel had gone on her way and found herself nearing the locality of Sealands, when her captain had decided to run in and make inquiries at Castle Bleak, if the schooner had been seen.

He did not know Castle Bleak as the home of Enrique Leslie, only that it appeared to be the home of some wealthy family, as he saw it from a distance, and, if the schooner had been in that locality, the dwellers there would doubtless know and could tell him in which direction Lonsdale had gone.

As he stood in toward the cliffs the wind almost left him, and he had, with what was left, made for the lee of the island, to ride out the storm which he saw was rising.

The island was one of some dozen acres, wild, rocky-shored, covered with stunted pines, and rising in places to considerable height.

It was shaped something like a horseshoe, and the waters between the rocky arms appeared to present a safe harbor.

Some league and a half distant from the cliffs of Castle Bleak, it yet was never visited by any one, for there were strange stories told that the island was haunted, and even Enrique Leslie had never been known to go there, bold as he was, as free from superstition as he said he was.

Enos had known other vessels to be wrecked there, by seeking its sheltering arms for a refuge, in storm, and it was said by the dwellers along the coast that hundreds of lives had been lost there, and that the spirits of the dead haunted the place, ran the legend.

As twilight came near, and the storm was surging along, threatening to break soon with fearful violence, Harold Vernon ordered both anchors let go, the topmasts housed, and all made ready to meet the tempest.

While the men were obeying his orders, a voice rung out from the shore with:

"Ho, the brig!"

"Ay ay, who hails?" answered Harold Vernon, greatly surprised, for he had not supposed that there was any one upon the island.

"One who warns you to get up your anchors and put to sea."

"It is impossible to do so."

"You are doomed if you stay there, for the water leaves that cove in a fierce blow, and rushes in again with a force that will crush you."

"But whither can we go?"

"To Castle Bleak Haven."

"I have no pilot, and know not the way thither."

"I will act as your pilot, under certain conditions."

"Name them."

"That you allow me to leave your vessel as soon as she is in safety, and make known to no one who saved you, and from whence came your pilot."

"I can but agree."

"Will you swear it?"

"Yes."

"And your crew?"

"I answer for them."

"If they do, remember they betray me who saves them from death."

"They will not betray you."

"I will come on board, then."

The speaker had not been more than twice the length of the brig away.

Hidden in the rocks, and in the gathering gloom, the best eye on the brig had failed to detect the one who had addressed them.

The voice seemed youthful, but was rich and clear.

Soon a boat came toward the brig, and a form stood up in it, sculling with a single oar.

A moment more and the form sprung on board the brig; and Harold Vernon fairly started as he said:

"A woman?"

"Yes; do you fear to trust me?"

"No; only I was surprised."

"What did you deem me?"

"A youth."

"I am but a girl, and yet I know these waters as no man knows them."

"But hasten, for time is short, and the storm is upon us."

The brig was quickly under storm staysails alone, and, the anchors being up, she swung around to the breeze.

But, after running out of the cove, this fair pilot brought her around again, and kept her under the lee of the island until the tempest struck its first savage blow.

"The force might have sent her under, had not the island broken the blow," she shouted to Harold Vernon, as the brig rose staggering from the shock.

"You were wise; but which way now?"

"Did you see the cliffs to the northwestward of you?"

"Yes."

"They are the cliffs of Castle Bleak, and there is a safe anchorage there."

"But can you get there in safety?"

"Oh, yes, for the lightning guides me; but I never saw so wicked a storm even on this coast."

She stood by the wheel, grasping it firmly, and Harold Vernon himself aided her.

The vivid glare of the lightning showed her to be a young girl, with a face that looked very handsome, yet a trifle wild, with her dark hair flowing in waves about her.

She wore a heavy storm-cloak, and yet her movements were graceful, and her voice, when she spoke in a low tone, was soft and musical, but rung like a bugle when she raised it in giving an order.

She was a perfect sailor, that was certain, and she ran the brig through the dangerous waters directly into the haven under the cliff.

"You are safe here, and can let fall your anchor."

"In the morning if the waters are calm, you can row out with your boats."

"Is this a British brig-of-war?"

"It is a British vessel, but a private one, intended for a privateer, and now on a special cruise; but may I ask if you have seen an armed schooner in the waters of late?"

"Yes."

"When, please?"

"To-day."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, she ran into this harbor last night, but left it this morning."

"And which way did she sail?" eagerly asked Harold Vernon.

"Down the coast, and if she did not put to sea, or find a pilot, she has gone down in this storm to-night."

"My God! I would rather lose my vessel here, than have Captain Lonsdale go down in the schooner."

"Lionel Lonsdale! did you say Captain Lionel Lonsdale?" almost shouted the girl, and she grasped the arm of Harold Vernon, as though it were in a vise.

"Yes, do you know him?"

She made no reply, but raising her arms above her head, sunk in a heap upon the deck.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AN ISLAND MYSTERY.

"HEAVEN have mercy! she is dead, I fear!"

So said Harold Vernon, as he bent over, and raised the maiden in his strong arms, and bore her into the cabin.

He placed her upon a lounge and called to the officer who was next in command, to come to his aid.

"She is not dead; but she is in a deep swoon," said Harold, gazing upon her beautiful face as it was upturned under the cabin lamp.

"The strain was too much for her, sir," said the officer.

Harold was about to explain why she had fainted, when he spoke of Lionel Lonsdale, when he thought that it was best for him not to do so.

Somewhat skilled in surgery, from the experience he had had, Harold took a lancet and quickly opened a vein in the round, ex-

quisite arm, while he bathed her face with camphor-water.

In a few moments she opened her eyes, started as she beheld her surroundings, and said:

"Where am I?"

"In the cabin of the vessel your courage saved from wreck, and with those who owe to you their lives," responded Harold.

"Ah! you are the captain of the brig-of-war?"

"I am her commander at present."

"Did you say she was lost?"

"Who?"

"The schooner."

"No, you said she would go down, if she had not a pilot, when the storm struck her."

"Yes, for he does not know the coast further down, though he does here; but I feel faint."

"I bled you to bring you to."

"But let me offer you some wine and food."

She did not refuse and the acting lieutenant went to find the steward to have him bring her something to eat, and some wine.

"Who are you?" asked Harold, with deep interest in the young girl.

"Don't ask me."

"But I wish to know to whom I owe my life, the lives of my crew and the safety of my vessel."

"I cannot tell you, and, as soon as I am able you will let me go, will you not?"

"Where?"

"Back to my island."

"Do you live there?"

"Don't ask me."

"But you cannot go back in this storm."

"Oh, yes, for my surf-skiff will live in any sea, and the gale will soon be over."

"And you will not tell me who you are, and why you live on that island?"

"No."

"I will not betray your confidence."

"No, and you swore not to tell who was your pilot."

"I will keep my word."

"Don't let your crew tell either."

"They will not; but why do you fear to have it known?"

"I would rather die than have it known."

"You are a strange girl; but you do not live alone on that island, do you?"

"Yes."

"Does no one about here know you are there?"

"Yes, one person; but he will not betray me and you must not."

"You have my promise."

"I believe you, for you have an honest face."

"Thank you, and you have a very beautiful face."

"Ah me! what is beauty?"

"It is much to possess, and few are so favored as you are; but tell me, may I ask you why you fainted on deck awhile ago?"

She shuddered, and then said:

"You spoke a name that I had not heard for a long while, a name that I had tried to forget, and it brought back a sad bygone, a bitter remembrance, and I felt the blood surge into my heart and brain in torrents, and I became unconscious."

"I spoke the name of Lionel Lonsdale."

"Yes."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"In the long ago."

"What was he to you?"

"Everything, once."

"And now?"

"He is nothing to me now."

"And you will tell me nothing more?"

"Do you know him?"

"Ah, yes; he is my truest friend, and all I am I owe to him."

"You love him then?"

"As I would an own brother."

"What is your name?"

"Harold Vernon."

She started and asked:

"Vernon?"

"Yes."

"Do you live in Boston?"

"My home is there, but I am a sailor, you know."

"Have you a sister?"

"Yes."

"Is she very beautiful?"

"I think so."

"More beautiful than I am?" and the query came with no coyness, no vanity.

"She is different from you, and as beautiful, I think, and that is saying a great deal."

"What is her name?"

"Belle."

Again she shuddered, and then she said, softly:

"I wish I had a brother like you."

"Let me be a brother to you then?"

"Oh, no! it cannot be, for I must go back to my island life, my solitude and my sorrow; but I am glad I met you, I will not forget you."

"Now let me go."

"Not until you have eaten some supper, for here comes the steward with it now."

"And then I can go?"

"I will keep my promise if you ask it."

"I do."

"May I not meet you again?"

"Do you wish to?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps some day we may meet again."

The steward now entered with a tray holding a tempting repast, and the strange girl ate with apparent relish and then drank a glass of wine.

"Now I must go; but remember your promise."

"Good-by!"

She held out her hand and Harold grasped it, and she went on deck.

Her surf-skiff was lowered over the side, she entered it in silence, and, with a wave of the hand rowed away in the gloom, unheeding the entreaties of Harold Vernon to remain.

But the storm was over, and though the sea still ran high the little boat danced over the rough waves like a feather, and watching its course the young sailor saw that she managed it with great skill and was heading back to her island home, leaving the mystery of her dwelling there unknown.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE WOUNDED SAILOR.

So full was the head of Harold Vernon with the mysterious and beautiful creature, who had been the pilot of the brig, and shrunk from telling him who she was, and yet seemed to place perfect confidence in him, that he did not get to sleep until long after midnight.

The brig rode easily at one anchor in the secluded little haven, and he felt no dread of trouble on that account, especially as the storm had blown itself out.

But still sleep would not come to his eyes for a long time, and when at last he did sink into a deep slumber, he dreamt of the beautiful eyes and pathetic voice of the lovely pilot.

When the morning came the sun arose in a cloudless sky, the birds sung merrily in the trees and all nature wore a smiling face.

The surf beat heavily against the rocky shore, but the sea had run down and was not lashed into foam as on the night before.

After breakfast Harold Vernon determined to land and see if he could not, without betraying his fair pilot, find out something about her.

He also wished to see from the cliff above, the island-dotted waters, and to discover if he could not tow out without a pilot, when the sea grew smooth enough to do so, which he knew would be in a few more hours.

He had a boat lowered and was soon put ashore upon a point of rocks, one of the land arms that sheltered the harbor.

It was not the regular landing of Castle Bleak, but this Harold did not know, and he began to make his way around to where he now beheld a path leading up through the pines to the cliff, when he suddenly came upon a man crouching among the rocks.

The man's face was haggard and stained with blood, and a gash on his forehead formed an ugly-looking wound.

"Why, my man, what are you doing here?"

"Have you been wrecked in some vessel?" kindly asked Harold.

The man gazed up at him in a pleading way, and then, as he passed his hand across his wounded head, he said in a low, earnest tone:

"I've been about half-dazed, sir, with this wound on my head, and I guess I'm just getting my senses back again."

"You have been dashed against the rocks and hurt yourself."

"No, sir, this is a bullet-wound, and, oh, sir! please let me go on board your vessel yonder, for if the one who shot me knows I am not dead, he will hunt me down."

"Please, sir, let me go on board, and if you need a coast pilot, I will serve you, so that you take me away from here."

The man spoke pleadingly, and Harold Vernon was moved by his words and manner, though he half-believed he was raving.

"Yes, you can go with me, and a pilot is just what I need, my man."

"I know these waters, sir, as well as I once did my mother's face, and I will serve you well, only take me from here."

"But who was it that shot you?"

"Once I am safe, sir, I will tell you; but he may come at any moment and kill me," and the man looked in a frightened kind of way toward the cliff-path.

"Come with me, my man," and Harold helped him to rise, for he seemed weak from loss of blood, and led him to the shore, the boat being there in waiting.

"Pull quickly for the brig, lads."

The men obeyed, and taking the man into his cabin, Harold quickly sewed up the wound, which he now saw had been made by a bullet cutting into the flesh, glancing on the frontal bone and passing out behind the head.

The wounds were tenderly dressed, and then the man was given some breakfast to revive him, with a glass of grog.

"I am all right now, sir, thanks to you," he said, after he had finished his meal.

"And you can tell me who shot you?"

"Yes, sir; it was the master of Castle Bleak."

"Ah! do you mean a French Exile by the name of Enrique Leslie?" asked Harold, who had heard of the master of Castle Bleak, his daughter's suicide, and his duel with Lonsdale, after which he had written the letters to the admiral and Belle Vernon against the captain of the Ill-Omen.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Leslie."

"And he shot you?"

"Yes, sir."

"But why?"

"Well, sir, I came with Captain Lonsdale to tell Mr. Leslie that I had seen Lady Lola jump from the cliff, and that the captain did not throw her off, as he accused him of doing, and the master was very angry with me."

"Then he fought a duel with Captain Lonsdale, sir, and—"

"When?"

"Yesterday, sir."

"With what result?" excitedly asked Harold.

"He wounded the captain slightly, sir, and the captain did not fire on him, but gave him his life, and went on board his schooner."

"But Mr. Leslie demanded another meeting, and Cap'n Lonsdale granted it, on condition that he should fight by proxy for some major, and this time Mr. Leslie's pistol was shot from his hand."

"The captain went away to his vessel, and the Exile was angry and shot me."

"I didn't know much more, sir, until I awoke among the rocks where you found me, and where I must have crept, and I saw your vessel in the harbor."

"My poor fellow, you have had a hard time of it, but I will go ashore and visit this Exile, to see what manner of man he is."

"Oh, sir, don't tell him you have seen me."

"Never fear; but I have a curiosity to see the man, who appears either to be mad or a cold-blooded villain."

"But do you know the waters down the coast?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I heard that Captain Lonsdale went down that way in his schooner, and I would like to follow."

"Yes, sir; but I do hope he was not caught by the storm down there without a pilot."

"I fear he was; but we will follow him as soon as I have visited the Exile," and Harold

Vernon once more went ashore, and following the chief path, soon came in view of Castle Bleak.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE MEETING ON THE CLIFF.

HARDLY had Harold Vernon reached the top of the cliff, when he was confronted by a person whom he did not know, but whose appearance was that of a courtly gentleman.

It was the Exile, and he had seen the brig in the harbor, and stood watching the sailor as he came up the path.

"Good-morning, sir," said Harold, raising his cap.

The Exile bowed, yet never spoke.

"I took the liberty of coming up here, sir, to obtain a view from the cliff, for I ran into what is your harbor below, if, as I suspect, you are Mr. Leslie, of Castle Bleak."

"Yes, I am Enrique Leslie, and this is my home; but may I make inquiry how it was that you got into that harbor by night?"

"I was run in by my pilot, sir."

"Who is he?"

"One who understands the coast well, I assure you."

"His name, please."

"May I ask in what way the name of my pilot holds interest to you?"

"I wish to know who it is on this coast that is making my little haven a public anchorage."

Enrique Leslie was in ill-humor, and he showed it; but Harold Vernon kept his temper and said:

"Mr. Leslie, I command a British vessel, sir, and when I am in danger I demand the right to seek refuge where I can find it."

"I was cruising along this coast yesterday, got caught in a light wind that would not admit of my going out to sea, and so I came to this haven."

"Well, sir, in future I hope you will understand that it is a private anchorage."

"In future, sir, if occasion requires, I shall again seek anchorage here, and I am surprised that one who has found refuge on English soil should wish to dictate against those who have a right to come here."

Enrique Leslie's face flushed, and he asked quickly and with a sneer:

"After intruding, sir, is it your desire to seek a quarrel with me?"

"No, for I must know the one I quarrel with, and as you seem so fearful of having visitors you must have cause for wishing to hide."

"I shall report this locality as suspicious."

The shot seemed to hit home, and the Exile became pallid as a corpse; but he replied:

"I have been so often the victim of disagreeable visitors, sir, that perhaps I am wrong in not discriminating, and I feel that I owe you an apology and beg that you will become my guest as long as you are pleased to anchor in my harbor."

Harold Vernon was amazed at this complete change in the Exile, and he attributed it to his random shot, after what he knew of the man.

But he was anxious to see something of Castle Bleak, and so he said in response:

"I am glad, Mr. Leslie, that you are willing to discriminate in my case, and I thank you for your offer of hospitality, but I must sail within a short while."

"At least let me ask you to enjoy a cup of coffee with me, though you doubtless have breakfasted?"

Harold Vernon accepted the invitation and accompanied the Exile across the weed-grown lawn to his home.

Where without all was desolation and ruin, within all was grandeur and luxury, and the young sailor was astounded at the superb home that he was ushered into.

Enos, in livery, served coffee and refreshments, and Enrique Leslie made himself most entertaining.

Upon all, however, rested a funeral pall, for the house was draped with sable velvet and crape, and the robes of mourning for Lady Lola were most impressive to the beholder.

"My house is in mourning for my child, Captain Vernon, for the sunshine of my life went out with her death," said the Exile sadly.

After half an hour passed in the mansion Harold said that he must go, as he wished to

cruise along the coast in search of a pirate which he had reason to suppose was in that vicinity.

The Exile did not urge him to stay, and bade him farewell at the door, though he told him he would be glad to welcome him again.

"He wishes to do away with the first impression he made upon me, and I am sure that my random shot brought him to terms."

"Exile Enrique Leslie will bear watching."

So mused the sailor as he returned to the brig.

Going on board he gave orders to get under way at once, and calling to Tony Bent he said:

"My man, I left the master of Castle Bleak at his mansion; but I am sure that he will come to the ship to discover who my pilot is, so you must disguise yourself as best you can, so that he will not recognize you."

"Thank you, sir," said Tony, and when he went on deck to take his place as pilot, the keen eyes of even Enrique did not know him, so completely metamorphosed was he.

And the eyes of Enrique Leslie were upon him, for, the moment that Harold Vernon had gotten out of sight he had taken his strongest glass and hastened to a clump of rocks upon the cliff, from whence, unseen, he could get a view of the brig and all on board.

His words, spoken half aloud, will show who he thought the pilot was.

"By Heaven! he has a negro for his pilot."

"Who can he be?"

"Ah! it must be that black slave of Lonsdale's, though I did not know that he knew these waters."

"Great heavens! the brig is going down the coast."

"But, no; he may find the wreckage of the schooner, but not a soul could have escaped."

"No, no; Lonsdale went to his doom last night with all on board, there is no doubt of that."

"There! the brig turns out for that sunken reef, so that black pilot knows these waters well."

"I was in hopes that she would strike on that."

"Well, I have nothing to fear now," and after watching the brig for a short while longer, the master of Castle Bleak returned to his desolate home.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SWAMPED.

THE man whom Enrique Leslie had addressed as "Kit," and who dwelt in the lonely cabin down the coast, was too anxious to see what his "pickings" would be to sleep during the night.

So he sat up waiting for the dawn, when he hoped the sea would run down enough for him to go over among the islands and search the bodies of the wrecked crew.

That the schooner had dashed to pieces on the rocks he well knew, for the crash had reached his ears, with the cries of the doomed men.

The wash of the waves he knew would throw the *debris* upon the islands where there was a sandy beach, and he hoped to reap quite a harvest from the wreckage and the dead bodies thus thrown up.

With the first glimmer of dawn he went down to the little cove.

Then he uttered an oath, for his surf-skiff, not properly fastened, had driven against the rocks and the side was stove in.

It took him several hours to repair it and then he found it would not do, and his cupidity would not allow him to wait longer; so he decided that he would go in his yawl, and spend no more time on his skiff.

The sea was running dangerously high, for it was a wild place about him; but he sprung into the yawl, raised the little sprit-sail and started out of the cove.

The storm had blown over, but the wind was strong yet, and came in puffs over the pine-clad ridge.

Several times the little boat very nearly went over, but Kit was a good sailor, and handled her well.

After getting well out he found that the sea was far rougher than he had believed, and he half regretted coming.

But he would not attempt to put about with the clumsy yawl, so held on.

Half a league away he saw a mass of wreckage, and he said:

"The schooner did not strike where I supposed it would, for it drove through the sunken reefs and was hurled upon the island beyond."

"But no one could have escaped that wreck, for the craft is but kindling-wood."

So on the man held his way until suddenly he encountered a danger he had overlooked.

It was the turning tide, meeting the storm-swell driving down the coast.

Instantly he saw his peril, and tried to put about.

But a gust of wind came, and his boat was hurled bottom upward.

So far was he thrown from it that he could not reach it, and he saw that he had to depend wholly upon his own strength and endurance.

It was a mile to the nearest island.

Could he reach it?"

He was weighted down with his heavy boots and clothing, and found it no easy task to swim with them.

The very life coat which he had given the Exile to put on, he had left behind at his cabin, and now, did he have it, he would feel no fear.

"I must get this weight off," he said, and he threw off his jacket.

Then came a struggle to get his boots off, and when he had done so, he was very nearly exhausted.

Throwing himself upon his back he floated, buffeted about by the rough waves, until he had gotten partially rested, and then he began to swim toward the nearest island.

But he had the tide to struggle against, and it did not take him very long to find that he was making no headway.

Then he began to realize that death was staring him in the face.

He had sought to rob the dead, and, unable to await the going down of the sea, he had risked his life from his cupidity.

He had left his cot at dawn, to start upon his unholy work, and here, after long hours, he was no nearer his object, yet far nearer to death.

The man's face became seamed with terror and though he knew not a soul was near him to hear, he shouted wildly for help.

Then he cursed, and next began to pray.

Suddenly from his lips broke the cry:

"Sail, ho!"

There, coming down the coast under considerable sail was a vessel.

She was handled in a manner that showed she had a skilled pilot on board.

She avoided sunken reefs, rounded bars, and held on at a good pace.

"Sail, ho!"

He shouted the words as though hailing the deck from the maintop.

The vessel was a brig and yet a mile away.

Instantly he began to swim toward her.

Now hope revived in his heart and he would be saved.

But his struggle to free himself of his clothes and boots, his fighting against the tide and lastly his loud cries had exhausted him.

Nearer and nearer came the vessel, but more and more exhausted did he become.

He struggled manfully, but to no purpose.

He tried to shout for help, but his voice was but a hoarse whisper.

At last, with the vessel but a cable's length away, and half a hundred fellow-beings gazing upon his death-struggles, he went down out of sight beneath the waters that he had defied in his desire to get gold through the loss of others.

CHAPTER L.

LOST AND FOUND.

WITH her tiller-ropes cut and the storm rushing upon her, there was no hope whatever for the schooner-of-war, *Spittire*.

This Lonsdale and his crew all realized.

The act of the pilot had been so sudden, that his words were ringing in their ears and he was in the sea before any one knew what had been done.

Lonsdale, seeing him go over the stern, and hearing his words, sprung to the wheel.

But it revolved uselessly in his hands.

To repair the damage then was an utter impossibility.

A glance out upon the waters showed the revengeful Exile in his boat and pulling for the shelter of the island.

Then came the shock of the storm, the schooner was lifted into the air, hurled over on her beam-ends and went driving along with frightful velocity.

By a strange fatality she passed through a break in the sunken surf, which Enrique Leslie had meant she should drive upon.

This saved her from total destruction there, and the loss of every soul on board.

A third of a mile beyond was an island.

Upon this she drove with fearful force, a huge wave carried her high in air, and she was dashed to pieces upon the rocks.

But as the vessel was in midair, Lonsdale shouted:

"Men, beyond this reef is a shore of sand."

"Fight hard for your lives!"

A gleam of lightning had shown him this, and his words gave hope to many.

But, mingling with the crash of the vessel upon the rocks, rung out the cries of despairing men.

Then there was a fierce struggle for life, of pigmy man against giant Nature.

Lonsdale felt his feet touch the sand, and, with a mighty struggle he reached the shore.

As the vessel was driving upon the rocks, he had seized a coil of rope, and this now came in well, for he threw the line to man after man and dragged him beyond the furious waters.

As they were rescued the men would run in and drag out their mates, and in this mad fight against death many lives were won.

Until all hope was gone, that others would appear, Lonsdale and his men stood waist-deep in the surging waters, trying to rescue their fellows.

"There are no more, sir," said Officer English, who stood near him.

"No, all are saved that can be."

"But you have been a hero, English, and I will not forget you for it."

"Come, let us try and revive some who appear dead."

Then the work of reviving those who lay motionless upon the sands went on, and at last the captain looked over the group of men about him and said sadly:

"Mr. English, you remember the crew?"

"Yes, sir."

"Call over the names and let us know who are lost."

"Yes, sir."

The names of the men were slowly called over by the officer, and each one answering stepped into line.

Now and then a name was called and no answer came, no man stepped into line.

At last the sad muster ended, and Lonsdale, who had kept count of the missing ones, said:

"Thirty-two here, fifteen missing, with Brandywine and five of the lads left at Sealand."

"We have to mourn for fifteen shipmates, lads; but we also have to be thankful that our lives have been spared, and that it is the little pirate schooner that has left her bones on this island, and not our noble ship of Ill-Omen."

"Now seek what rest you can until the dawn comes."

The men answered with a cheer, and leading the way among the rocks, Lonsdale soon found a camping-place, and the worn-out mariners sunk down to rest and sleep.

The sun was rising when Lonsdale awoke.

He felt stiff and sore, but rising to his feet soon shook off the feeling.

His men lay about upon the grass utterly prostrated, and yet they awoke when one of them called out:

"Good-morning, captain. Three cheers for our gallant captain!"

The cheers were given with a will, by the half-awake crew, and the men arose and shook themselves together.

The bodies of their comrades were then found and carried into the island for burial, and among the wreckage were found implements with which graves could be dug.

The schooner was but a heaped-up pile of wreckage; but some of the men managed to get hold of some provisions, some powder from a keg and a flint ignited some leaves, and a fire was soon started and breakfast was indulged in with a relish that only those in like circumstances can appreciate.

One of the schooner's boats had been less damaged than the others, and this one the carpenters at once went to work upon to repair, as their only means of escape from the island.

While waiking about the island Lonsdale glanced toward the mainland, and his eyes fell upon a small boat coming off.

"There comes a brave fellow to our aid."

"Some poor fisherman who dwells upon the coast and has seen our misfortune."

"Well, we are not as bad off as we might be, and it will not be long before we can be on the tramp for Sealands, for I do not suppose I can find a craft in these waters to carry us there."

"That is a plucky fellow to come out in so rough a sea."

"I will tell the men." And back into the island Lonsdale went, and a cheer greeted his words that succor was at hand.

The graves were now ready, and the bodies of their dead comrades were placed in them, while Lonsdale repeated over them the solemn burial service.

Then all hands, excepting the carpenters working on the boat, went across the island to see the brave man coming to their rescue, but he was nowhere to be seen.

What had become of him Lonsdale did not know; the puffing wind and rough sea led him to surmise that he had been swamped.

"Sail ho!" he suddenly cried, as around an island a vessel shot into view.

A cheer broke from the crew, and Lonsdale's voice rung out like a trumpet as he recognized the vessel and shouted:

"Lads, we are saved, for see, it is the Belle of Blue Water!"

Loud were the cries of joy that followed his words, and, as the vessel drew nearer, answering cheers from her decks were heard, which told of equal joy at the brig's crew in having found their comrades, whom, when they beheld the wreckage of the schooner on the rocks, they feared had all been lost.

CHAPTER II.

WELL MET.

UNDER the skillful pilotage of the wounded sailor, Tony Bent, the brig ran to an anchorage under the lee of the island on which the wrecked crew were, and Harold Vernon was soon in a boat going ashore.

As he leaped out upon the sands, he grasped the hand of Lionel Lonsdale, while he cried earnestly:

"Thank God, Captain Lonsdale, I find you alive."

"Yes, Harold, I am all right, with the lads you see here; but we have lost fifteen poor fellows, though the wonder is that any of us escaped, for you saw the wreck of the schooner."

"Yes, and marvel at your escaping instant death, but I am more than happy to find you."

In a few words Harold Vernon told of the *goleta's* coming into port, and what his spies had discovered, and that, in his anxiety, he had taken the brig and come in search of him, and of the Ocean Ogre.

"My noble Harold, you have done just right."

"But you alarm me in what you say about the Ocean Ogre being in these waters, for, as you know, Eve and Lurline are at Sealands, and, though Brandy and four of my men are there, they could do nothing against the pirate and his crew."

"Let us at once return to Sealands then, sir."

"Yes, as soon as we can get off."

Some of the wreckage of value from the schooner was hastily collected, and sent on board the brig, which lowered all of her boats to help in the work, and in a couple of hours she set sail away from the fatal island.

"But how did you manage to come down among these islands, Harold, in this sea and breeze?" said Lonsdale.

"Here is my pilot, and if it were not for his blackened face, you would know him as Tony Bent."

"Ah, my old pilot, whom I left at Castle Bleak?"

"Yes, captain, and I have a story to tell you, sir," and Tony Bent saluted politely as he came forward.

"But who was the man, Tony, that was wrecked while coming off to our rescue?" asked Lonsdale.

"It could only have been Sailor Kit, sir, and he was coming out to rob the dead, not to rescue the living, sir, for he is a bad man."

"And you saw him sink, sir?"

"No, but I saw him coming out, and when next I looked he was gone."

"We saw him sink, sir, and it is better so," and after a moment of silence, Tony continued:

"Captain Lonsdale, I wish to make a confession to you, sir."

"Well, out with it, Tony, for an honest confession is said to be good for the soul."

"I want you, sir, to promise me a pardon, and no punishment, if I tell you all, for I have been a bad man, Captain Lonsdale."

"I have suspected you of that, my man."

"You suspected me of being a smuggler, sir."

"Yes, and perhaps worse."

"I have been worse, sir, for I am one of the Casco Corsairs."

"You see I am trusting you, sir."

"Yes, and you may, Tony, for you did a good turn for me, so out with what you have to say."

Tony looked at the two men at the wheel, and whom, from time to time he was directing how to steer, and then he said:

"Captain, I want you and Lieutenant Vernon to hear what I have to say, but no one else."

"If you will send those men forward, I'll take the wheel and you can stand near and hear my story, and it's worth hearing, too."

Lonsdale called out to the quartermasters to go forward, and Tony took the wheel, while he and Harold Vernon stood near, Officer English having gone to the cabin for rest, for he was considerably used up after his hard struggle the night before.

"Captain Lonsdale, do you know how I got this wound?"

"No, Tony."

"Well, sir, it was given me by the master of Castle Bleak."

"Indeed! you feared him then with cause?"

"Yes, sir."

"But why did he shoot you?"

"To silence my tongue."

"Ah!"

"You see he saw me in your company, sir, and he knew I could talk if so I wished, and he was determined that I should not."

"I told you I feared him, and as soon as you left he said that your shot had not caused his hand to lose its cunning, and with that he fired at me."

"His aim was true, but the bullet glanced."

"He supposed I was dead and left me there, but I came back to consciousness, and then I hid among the rocks, where Lieutenant Vernon found me this morning."

"I am not the ignorant man I have tried to appear, captain, nor am I a fisherman, as supposed."

"I was the spy of Enrique Leslie, and lived on that island to receive news for him from certain vessels, and to give orders, for Enrique Leslie is not a French Exile, as the people believe."

"Ah! I half-suspected it," said Harold Vernon.

"Go on, Bent, for you interest us," Lonsdale quietly remarked.

"Mr. Leslie is a Spaniard, not a Frenchman, and he was once a gentleman in Cuba."

"His life was not irreproachable, however, and he had a twin brother whom he hated because he was a true man."

"The two brothers fell in love with the same maiden, a lovely girl some years their junior, and the heiress of vast wealth; but she preferred Randolpho Valverde, for such was his brother's name, to Enrique Valverde."

"The result was a duel between them and Enrique nearly killed his brother and fled."

"Their father disinherited him, when he died, and marrying the maiden upon his recovery, Randolpho hoped for a happy life with his lovely bride."

"But when their little child was a year old, it was stolen from their home, and in despair Randolpho moved with his bride to America."

"He sought a home now known as Castle Bleak, and he built it, and there hoped to be free from his revengeful brother, who he knew had stolen his child."

"But one night Randolpho and his wife,

with their servants, were murdered in Castle Bleak."

"It was the work of Enrique Valverde, who had turned pirate, and some years after he went to that very scene of his crime, purchased the estate and settled down there to live with the little child, Lola, whom he claimed was his daughter."

"Ah!" said Lonsdale.

"A strange story indeed," remarked Harold Vernon.

"This child grew up to believe Enrique Leslie, the French Exile, as he called himself, her father."

"But Enrique Valverde had been a pirate for years, and he simply transferred his scenes of piracy from the Gulf to this coast, and he is now captain of the Coast Corsairs, directing all their movements and getting the lion's share of their robberies."

Lonsdale whistled, as a means of showing his surprise, and Harold Vernon uttered an exclamation of intense delight.

"Now the man, Kit, who was drowned, is the watch-dog, like myself, for this coast further down, as I am for the end where I dwell."

"I was a wild, reckless fellow, and American from the Carolinas, and too ready to go wrong. I drifted into piracy and thus met Enrique Valverde."

"I became mate of his vessel, and when it was captured he escaped, and aided me to do so, thus saving our necks."

"Then it was that he came here and settled and I became his ally."

"Knowing that I was aware of all that he was, he was suspicious of me at times, and had often said that if he ever had real reason to suspect me, he would kill me."

"It was for that I feared him, and you gentlemen can understand that I had good cause."

"Well, Mr. Bent, this is a marvelous story you have told; but I cannot but believe it all, and I will promise you that you shall not be known to others, other than as you appear."

"I thank you, captain," was the fervent response.

"But there is something more for you to do, Bent."

"There is much for me to do, sir."

"I wish to hunt down those Coast Corsairs, and I believe you can help us."

"Yes, sir; I can pilot you to their haunts, for they have two."

"And when are they there?"

"They will doubtless be there to-morrow, for their vessels come in there for orders, which Kit delivers to one party and I to another."

"Then one rendezvous cannot be far from here?"

"No, sir; it is not two leagues away."

"How many vessels have they?"

"A large sloop in Kit's rendezvous and a small chebacco boat, with about fifteen men."

"And in yours?"

"A schooner of forty tons, two chebacco boats and some thirty five men."

"Quite a respectable pirate band."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what would you suggest, Bent?"

"I would suggest, sir, that you sail at once for Castle Bleak, and have Lieutenant Vernon call upon Captain Leslie, as we know Enrique Valverde."

"He can then capture him and his servants, for one of them, Enos, is a pirate, though the others are ignorant of their master's secret life."

"When you have secured the captain, Lieutenant Vernon could go in the Castle Bleak yacht, with thirty men, under a pilot I will find for him, and run into the Kit rendezvous and capture the whole band and their vessels, while I will pilot you, Captain Lonsdale, in the brig, to my rendezvous, and thus both bands can be secured to-night."

"A well-arranged plan, Bent, and we will do as you suggest."

"Now we will head for Castle Bleak and capture its pirate master, who will be somewhat surprised to see me, whom he thought he had sent to death in the storm with all my crew."

"To Castle Bleak Haven it is, sir," promptly replied Tony Bent, and then he added, in a low tone:

"But there is more to tell you, gentlemen."

"Out with it, Bent; but you cannot sur-

prise us now with anything, after all you have told us."

"I think I can, Captain Lonsdale," was the reply of the self-confessed pirate.

CHAPTER LII.

A SURPRISE INDEED.

THE manner of the sailor showed that he had more to tell, and of as equally interesting character as that which he had related about the master of Castle Bleak.

"I said I would find you a pilot, Mr. Vernon, to run you down to Kit's retreat."

"Yes, Bent."

"I wish to tell you who that pilot is."

"Well?"

"It is a young girl."

Harold Vernon started, for he had not forgotten his fair pilot of the night before.

His promise to her he had kept, for he had not referred to her in speaking to Enrique Leslie, nor did he intend to let even Lonsdale know about her until he discovered who and what she was, and she had released him from his pledge of secrecy.

"It is a young girl, gentlemen, and she lives upon an island which all coasters avoid believing it to be haunted by the ghosts of those that have been wrecked upon it."

"The girl is about the best pilot in these waters, and I wish to tell you her story, for I don't like to have her lead the life of loneliness she does now."

"The truth is, Captain Lonsdale, she is Lady Lola."

A cry broke from the lips of Lionel Lonsdale at the words of the sailor.

"Lola Leslie?"

"Yes, sir."

"I saw her die, Bent," said Lonsdale in a mystified kind of way.

"You thought so, sir."

"She certainly threw herself from the cliff."

"Yes, sir, and sunk beneath the waters."

"But do you remember a large rock out from the cliff a cable's length?"

"Yes."

"It was there that I was, sir, fishing, with my boat hauled out, and the rock is so broken that there are scores of hiding places in it."

"I saw her fall, sir, and I gave her up for dead, but a moment after she rose not far from the rock."

"She was not even unconscious, and the swift outward tide was bearing her away."

"I sprung in and reached her side, and she said in a dazed kind of way:

"Hide me, Bent."

"Let him believe that I am dead."

"I swam with her to the rock, Captain Lonsdale, and reaching there she became unconscious and I really believed that she was dead for awhile."

"I saw you search for her, and, at last she revived, and asked me vaguely if you had seen her."

"I told her that you had just gone to your vessel, and given up the search."

"Then she told me that she was determined to be thought dead, by you, for she had loved you with her whole soul; but had come to her senses and felt that it was sinful for her to stand in your way any longer."

"I wish I could go away to myself, Bent, for do you know, I do not love my father as I should?"

"I fear him."

"So she said to me, and just why I did it, I do not know; but, under an impulse that I could not resist, I told her the story of her parent's life and death, and that Enrique Valverde was their murderer."

"I did not feel it was right to let her longer love a man whom she believed her father, and whose hand was stained with the blood of her parents."

"She listened to all I said, so white, so scared-looking, that I feared I had killed her."

"But at last she told me that she would not go back to Castle Bleak, but let Enrique Leslie also believe her dead."

"She said she would go to the Haunted Island and live alone."

"I tried to dissuade her, but she was determined, and after nightfall I carried her there in my boat."

"I went to my island and got for her some provisions, and then from the rendezvous I stole bedding and everything that I thought would make her comfortable."

"I got a small surf-skiff for her, in which she could leave the island if she wished to do so, and a gun and fishing tackle."

"Every week I visited her, conveying her provisions, and I found her calm and contented."

"I had helped to build for her a small cabin, and she seemed to really be glad to be away from Castle Bleak."

"Yonder is the island, gentlemen, and it is the one you were once so nearly wrecked upon, Captain Lonsdale, and would have been but for Lady Lola."

They both gazed on the island indicated, and toward which the brig was sailing, and Lonsdale asked:

"Is the Lady Lola still upon the island, Bent?"

"Yes, sir."

"Permit me also to say that she is, for now I can make known, as Bent has told her secret, what I pledged not to tell," said Harold Vernon.

Both Lonsdale and Tony Bent gazed at the young officer with surprise, and the former asked:

"And what can you tell about her, Harold?"

"That I sought an anchorage in the cove of that island last night, when the storm was rising, and was hailed from the shore."

"I answered, and soon, to my surprise, a pilot came off in a small skiff, who proved to be a young and beautiful girl."

"She told me of our danger, and she ran the brig to the haven of Castle Bleak, after which she sought to leave the vessel, when in some way your name was mentioned, Captain Lonsdale, and it seemed to affect her deeply, for she fainted."

"I took her into the cabin, held her and she revived, after which she ate some supper I had brought to her, and soon after departed in her skiff, in spite of the rough sea that was running after the storm."

"I had her promise that I would some day meet her again, and I intended to visit her when next I came near the island, and try to solve her mystery."

"I am glad to know it now."

"And so am I, Harold, and, after we have secured the master of Castle Bleak, you had better go over to the island, and, telling her all, ask her to pilot you to the rendezvous where that man Kit met his pirate mates."

"I will, sir; but what shall be done with the one you call Lady Lola?"

"I leave it to your persuasive powers, Harold, to entice her from her life of exile and go to Boston, where I feel that Eve, and your sister also, will do all in their power for her happiness."

"I know that they will, sir; but, as we are getting near to Castle Bleak, had you not better go into the cabin, Captain Lonsdale, for if that arch pirate sees you it will spoil all, and cause him to take to flight?"

"You are right, and we must have no mishap of that kind."

"I leave all in your hands, Harold," and Lionel Lonsdale left the deck, while Tony Bent, with his blackened face, appearing just like a negro at a distance, held the brig away for the anchorage under the cliff of Castle Bleak.

CHAPTER LIII.

RETRIBUTION.

IT was near the sunset hour when the Belle of Blue Water dropped anchor in the little harbor of Castle Bleak.

Harold Vernon at once prepared to go ashore, and was called to the cabin by Lonsdale, who said:

"I have a desire to see how that man takes his arrest, Harold, so I will put on the rig of a seaman and go with you."

His dark silken mustache, which had given him a foreign look, was shaved off instantly, and he soon got into the dress of an ordinary seaman, darkened his face a little and pulled his tarpaulin down over his eyes.

"I'll keep behind the other men, and you had better carry five along, with irons for the pirate."

This was done, and the boat touching the shore, Harold Vernon sprung out and walked alone up the path, while Lonsdale and the men remained near the boat.

Standing upon the cliff was Enrique Valverde, as he is now known.

He had seen the brig returning, and had said to himself:

"They did not stay long; but who on earth is that black pilot? He is not large enough for Lonsdale's giant slave."

As he could not get an answer to this question, he began to wonder why the brig returned so soon, for she had gone but a few leagues down the coast.

"Why, she is heading in for this haven! What does that mean, I should like to know? Bah! I must not let foolish fears startle me, for doubtless that young Vernon wishes to anchor here for the night, and at the same time be my guest."

"I must treat him well, for the remark he made to-day fairly startled me, and I must do nothing to excite suspicion."

"Now that Lonsdale is out of the way, I have not so much to fear; but, as long as he lived I had the dread of discovery before me—yes, a boat is coming ashore and Vernon is in it. I will pretend to be glad he has returned."

As Harold Vernon reached the summit of the cliff, he heard the cheery words:

"Ah! back again, Captain Vernon; so I claim you for my guest to-night?"

"Thank you, Mr. Leslie, but I wish to ask if it is possible to get from you a few sacks of flour, as we—"

"Certainly, sir, certainly, for I keep my store-house most liberally stocked."

"Then I will call to my men to come up and fetch them," and Harold Vernon hailed his crew and ordered them to come up to the cliff.

The men came up the hill, Lonsdale keeping in the rear, and as they drew near to where the unsuspecting pirate and Harold Vernon stood, the latter said:

"Enrique Valverde, you are my prisoner!"

Quick as a flash Harold covered him with a pistol, and springing to each side of him two of the seamen grasped the arms of the outlaw.

He became perfectly bloodless, and his eyes seemed to sink back in his head, while his lips were drawn hard over his teeth; but, with an effort at self-control, he said:

"Captain Vernon, what hideous joke is this you dare to play on me?"

"Put the irons on him, my man," was the command.

One of the men stepped forward and quickly obeyed, the pirate offering no resistance, although he was armed, in fact he never went without a brace of pistols, even in his own home.

"You shall rue this indignity, sir!" cried the pirate, raising his manacled hands and shaking them at Harold Vernon; "you are acting without authority, sir, in this infamous arrest."

"Pardon me, Enrique Valverde, but Lieutenant Vernon is acting on my authority."

It was Lonsdale who spoke, and as he did so he stepped forward and confronted the sea outlaw.

His face already bloodless could turn no whiter, but his eyes seemed fairly to start from their sockets, as they rested upon the man he believed at the bottom of the sea.

With a shriek of horror he sprung backward, and then suddenly rushed for the cliff.

In vain did the seamen try to catch him. They were too late, for Enrique Valverde, manacled as he was, sprung from the dizzy height and went down like a stone.

He struck the water with fearful force and sunk from sight, to rise not again until his body should be cast by the sea upon the sands.

"Now to secure Enos," said Lonsdale, who was the first one of the group to speak.

"I will go forward with some of the men and secure him," answered Harold Vernon, and, ten minutes after, he rejoined Lonsdale upon the cliff, and Enos, half frightened out of his wits, was a prisoner in irons.

"You had better run over to the island now, Harold, with Bent, and go in one of the little sail-boats in the cove, as you can make better time."

"Tell Lady Lola all that has occurred, and tell her that her brother, Lionel Lonsdale, offers her his protection."

Harold Vernon at once departed, in a small sail-boat belonging to Castle Bleak, and Tony Bent, who seemed deeply moved

by the death of Enrique Valverde, accompanied him.

Standing in a pine thicket, Lola Valverde, for such was her name, saw the brig run into Castle Bleak Haven.

"Who is that negro at the helm?" she asked herself; then, watching with her glass, she beheld the meeting between Harold Vernon and the man whom she had believed to be her father.

She saw the seamen go up to the cliff, then observed a short struggle and beheld a man break away and bound over the precipice.

One glance she had of that flying form and it told her who it was.

"A just retribution!" came from her lips, and, remembering her own marvelous escape, after her flight from the cliff, she eyed the waters closely with her glass, to see that he did not reappear.

But, where her skirts had buoyed her flight downward, the man had fallen like a stone.

Seeing the small boat approach she started, for she saw that one was the pilot, whom she believed to be a negro, the other was Harold Vernon.

She did not run away, but waited their coming.

Springing ashore, Harold advanced toward her, while Tony Bent remained in the boat.

"We meet again, Miss Valverde," and Harold politely saluted as he spoke.

She started at hearing the name, and said: "Have you come to tell me of the death of the master of Castle Bleak, which I saw?"

"Yes, to tell you that we discovered, through your friend, Tony Bent, all that Enrique Valverde was, all that he had done to wrong you.

"I arrested him as a pirate, and, when confronted by Captain Lonsdale, whose vessel he wrecked last night, he sprung from the cliff, all ironed though he was."

"God is just! I thank him!"

It was a short, simple prayer, and she raised her hands and eyes to Heaven as she spoke.

"I know your sad story also, Miss Valverde, and that you knew nothing of what your wicked uncle was, until Bent made it known to you.

"I now ask you to be my pilot to-night, to the little harbor which Bent says is known as Kit's rendezvous, and I will capture one of the bands of pirates under Valverde, while Captain Lonsdale will sail in the brig with Tony as pilot to take the other party."

"And Captain Lonsdale was wrecked by Valverde?"

"Yes," and Harold Vernon told the story of Valverde's going on board the schooner and wrecking her.

"He should have met a worse death than the one he suffered, for his crimes were many."

"And Captain Lonsdale asked me to say to you that as a brother he offered you his protection.

"Will you accept it?"

"Yes, and as a sister I will be to him," was the low response.

"I am glad to hear this, Miss Valverde; but will you go with me now, as pilot, for yonder person in the boat is your faithful friend, Tony Bent, who will be most glad to wash the black off of his face, as he has been playing negro to avoid the keen eye of Valverde."

"I will go with you, and gladly," was the reply, and half an hour after, Lola entered the cabin of the brig, where Lionel Lonsdale was awaiting her, with some trepidation as to how she would act toward him.

But the wild, desperate Lola he had known, was not the one who now glided up to his side, grasped his hands and said:

"Forgive me, for the past, Lionel. You were right, I was wrong, and henceforth you are my brother."

CHAPTER LIV.

TWO STORIES.

It was with a very sad heart that Brandywine, the faithful slave of Lionel Lonsdale, sat each day on the piazza at Sealands, awaiting the return of his master in the schooner.

The day that Eve and Lurline had boldly rowed out to save the lateen-rig craft from the fury of the storm, Brandy had driven to the town, distant some miles, and the four

seamen, having completed their work, accompanied him.

When they returned it was the next day, for the storm had detained them all night.

To their horror they learned from the two old house servants at Sealands that neither Eve or Lurline had been seen since the following day.

The old negress had gone to call them to supper, but could not find them, and she supposed that they had walked over to a neighbor's and remained there, for there was a farmer two miles away, whose family Eve was often wont to visit.

But the morning came and the maidens did not appear.

Soon after the old farmer rode by, and he said they had not been to his house.

Then the old negress remembered that they had said they were going for a sail upon the bay.

So matters stood when Brandy and the sailor returned.

Their search at once revealed the fact that Eve's little skiff was not in the haven.

Then it was found without oars, or its tiny sail, lying upon the shore a mile away.

This told the story.

The two girls had gone out for a sail, been caught in the storm, and had gone to the bottom.

Bitterly did Brandy and all bewail their sad fate, and each day did the faithful negro sit on the piazza watching for the coming schooner, that he might tell to his master the sad news.

At last a sail appeared in sight.

It was not the schooner, but the brig, and soon appearing in her wake were several smaller craft.

Instantly Brandy recognized the craft as the one armed by Commodore Vernon, and calling to the seamen they all went down to the shore.

Unable to await the slow approach, for the wind was light, they sprung into a boat and rowed out to meet the brig, expecting to find the commodore on board, and perhaps his daughter.

Their surprise was great when hailed by Lonsdale himself, and boarding hastily, Brandy in broken voice told of the loss of the two maidens.

To the amazement of all Lonsdale said, in a low, deliberate tone:

"I wish that I could believe that it was as you say, Brandy, but I fear it is worse."

"Worse, master?"

"Yes, for I believe they have been kidnapped by the Ocean Ogre."

"Oh, master!"

"Have you seen no vessel in these waters?"

"None, sir."

"Have heard of none?"

"No, sir."

"Well Old Nat would be likely to know."

"Yes, sir."

"I will take your boat and go there."

Lonsdale, the four seamen and Brandy entered the boat and moved rapidly down the coast for a league.

There was a small island and upon it dwelt an old fisherman, who lived the life of a hermit.

He was known as Old Nat, and from boyhood Lionel Lonsdale had been a great favorite with him.

The old man, on the shady side of seventy, was seated in front of his log cabin smoking his pipe, when he saw the boat approaching.

He arose and met it at the landing, and greeted Lonsdale warmly.

"Nat, have you seen any strange craft in these waters of late?"

"There was a awful queer critter in these waters, Master Leo, the day afore that great storm, nigh a week ago."

"What was she?"

"A long, low craft, with huge sails like wings, and—"

"The Ocean Ogre's new vessel, as I live!"

"But go on, old man."

"Well, Master Leo, I seen her in dangerous ground to be in, with such a storm coming up, and as I was thinking of going to her to run her to a place of safety, I got my eye on a boat going out."

"In it was your sister, sir, and the lady as is with her at Sealands, and— But, oh, Lord! Master Leo, is you ill?"

"Nat, that vessel was a pirate craft, and my sister is his captive."

"Come!"

Away bounded Lonsdale to the boat, and quickly the oarsmen pulled for the Sealands Harbor.

The brig, and her little fleet of pirate vessels, which had been captured, with their crews, at the two rendezvous of the Casco Corsairs, had dropped anchor; but the loud orders of Lonsdale quickly got the Belle of Blue Water under way, and the outlaw vessels were left to bring the freight from Sealands to Boston.

Away sped the brig, crowding on all sail, and the following night Admiral Fenton was startled by seeing Lonsdale suddenly appear before him, when a visitor was announced.

"Admiral Fenton, I have returned, sir, to report the loss of the schooner Spitfire by wreck, and the death of fifteen of her crew."

"I was rescued by the brig Belle of Blue Water, under Mr. Harold Vernon, and we have captured the entire fleet of the Casco Corsairs, and their chief has taken his own life."

"But I found that in my absence, the Ocean Ogre visited my home and captured my sister and her lady companion, and I desire to sail at once in my vessel, the Ill-Omen, which is all ready for sea, and have Mr. Vernon follow in the brig, in search of the pirate."

"The fleet of the Casco Corsairs I turn over to you, sir, with their booty, and they will arrive soon, while the outlaws, in the present need of men, I shall use, and, if they do not serve me faithfully, I shall swing them to the yard-arm."

Admiral Fenton had had hardly time to catch his breath with surprise, but he could but accede to the plans of Lionel Lonsdale, and half an hour after the Ill-Omen went flying out to sea, having been put in splendid condition, and in her wake was the Belle of Blue Water under command of Harold Vernon.

Lonsdale and Harold hardly had ten minutes' conversation with the commodore and Belle, to tell them what had occurred, but, hoping for the best, the captain of the Ill-Omen had asked Commodore Vernon to receive Lola Valverde, upon her arrival, and make her welcome, when the little fleet came in; also to have his freight from Sealands put in the house which he had secured for his sister, and Belle had said hopefully:

"It shall be all ready to welcome her when you bring her back," and then the maiden and her father had driven to Beacon Hill to see the two vessels run out of the harbor, while Frank Fenton, hearing of what had happened, hastened to his father.

"What is this about that Ill-Omen ship and that brig of Vernon's putting to sea, sir?" he cried, bursting in upon the admiral.

"It is true."

"Why was I not sent in the Saturn, if there are prizes to be won?"

"There is a prize, my son, and I guess Lonsdale will get it, for he has gone in chase of the Ocean Ogre, whose craft you could not catch, and Miss Lonsdale and the young girl Lurline, are again captives of the pirate."

"I do not believe it, sir; but that Lonsdale has taken this means of getting out with his frigate and the brig, after hearing the news that hostilities had begun between the king and his Colonies."

"I hope that such is not the case, Frank."

"You may rest assured that it is, sir, and you will never see Lonsdale again, at least in the king's uniform," and leaving this unpleasant reflection for his father to con over, the irate young commander of the king's frigate Saturn returned to Military Hall.

CHAPTER LV.

UNLOOKED-FOR AID.

WORDS are inadequate to portray the feelings of both Eve and Lurline, when they discovered how their act of humanity had gotten them into the clutches of the cruel Ocean Ogre, whom they had had so much cause to fear.

He made known to them that they should be treated with courtesy, and again sent to his retreat, this time to the Wreckers' Island.

There he would come after he had accomplished a certain work he wished to do, and

which was to capture Lionel Lonsdale and his old lieutenants, Harold Vernon and English, though he did not make known to the two maidens what it was that he meant to accomplish.

As the storm seemed to favor him, the Ocean Ogre, not wishing to have it known that Eve and Lurline were his captives, decided to get out of the little bay by night, and at the same time cast the little skiff ashore, in which Eve and Lurline had come out to his vessel, that it might appear they had been drowned.

So out of the harbor the Whirlwind crept, after the storm was over, and no one but Old Nat had seen what had occurred.

Going out to sea, in the track of merchant traders, it did not take long for the Ocean Ogre to capture just the vessel he needed.

It was a trim brig, a Spanish craft, loaded with a rich cargo, and bound to the Carolinas.

Merciless toward Spaniards, the Ocean Ogre had ordered no quarter shown the crew, and thus rid of them, he had told his second officer, Monon, to take ten men from the wrecker crew, and carry the prize to the Wreckers' Island.

"I shall send my captives in her, Senor Monon, and mark my words, no one on the island is to know that they are there, except the old wrecker chief, who will tell you where to take them, as he knows of a small isle where they can be kept until I come."

"Yes, senor."

"If the Senora Marcelite discovers that they are there, some heads shall fall, do you hear?"

"Yes, senor."

"And give this letter to the old wrecker, and he will understand it."

"Ay ay, Senor Captain."

"Now be off as quickly as you can and take only the wreckers, for they are not worth what your Gypsies are."

The young Coast Gypsy officer got his men together quickly, sent them on board the Spanish brig, and then went back for the captives!

They obeyed the order to leave the schooner, glad to know they were to be at least free from the presence of the hated Ocean Ogre, who bade them a courteous farewell, and then muttered, as the two vessels swung apart:

"Well, matters are shaping as I wish, for that old wrecker, when he receives my letter by Monon, will get rid of Marcelite, as I ask him to do, and with Lionel Lonsdale in my power, I can force his beautiful sister to become my wife, to save her brother's life."

"Now to hunt him down," and the Whirlwind squared away to seek the Spitfire, while the little Spanish brig headed southward.

Hardly had they gotten a league apart when the eye of the Coast Gypsy skipper fell upon one whom he did not know was on board.

It was a youth—of fourteen he looked—a red-haired, black-eyed, rail-faced urchin who had come on board the Whirlwind with the wreckers, and was known as Zip.

He had passed most of his time up aloft, and seemed to fear the Ocean Ogre as he did the devil, for he always kept out of his sight.

In fact, he had kept very much to himself, but had appeared to be on friendly terms with several of the wreckers.

"Who told you to come on board of this vessel?" shouted Monon.

"Nobody, senor," was the meek response.

"I have half a mind to throw you overboard, sir, and make you swim after the Whirlwind."

"Ah, senor! please don't, sir," whined Zip.

"I will catch it from the captain for letting you come, when he finds it out, and you are no use, anyway."

"I can cook, sir."

"Well, I'll make you cook, and see that you don't kill us with your cooking."

Zip danced a jig in his delight, and then darted into the caboose and quickly had things in order.

"That boy is of some use after all," said Senor Monon, when he sat down to supper that night and saw what a really tempting repast Zip had prepared.

Thus several days passed away, and one morning Senor Monon did not turn out of

his bunk, and the same was the case with eight of the wrecker crew.

But Zip and two of the men were early on deck, and the former said as he joined the others:

"Lads, I have got irons on Senor Monon and the eight men, and tied them in their hammocks."

"They hain't dead, is they Zip?" asked one of the two men.

"Oh no, I put enough of the drug in to make them sleep for hours; but they'll come to pretty soon," answered Zip.

"Well, which way now?"

"We'll head for Boston."

"It's risky business, Zip, for we'll stand a chance of getting our necks stretched," said one of the men.

"Not after what we have done, lads."

The brig's course was now changed, and then Zip went into the cabin, where Eve and Lurline, pale and anxious, had just arisen.

"Don't look sad, senoritas, for you are no longer the captives of the man you know as the Cuban Corsair."

A cry of delight was Zip's response, and then he said:

"You see me, as I appear, a red-headed, soiled-face boy; but let me tell you that I am the Donna Marcelite Murel, the wife of the pirate chief, whom I now hate as intensely as once I loved him."

The exclamation of surprise from the two girls the disguised woman did not notice, but continued:

"When my husband sought another retreat, I feared that he meant to recapture you, Senorita Lonsdale, and I determined to thwart him; so, when he bade me farewell, I hastily cut my hair off, put on this old masquerade rig which I had among some things, and this boy's suit, and with my face stained with walnut juice I went on board the Whirlwind before she sailed."

"The old crew supposed I had come with the wrecker crew, and the latter thought that I belonged on the Whirlwind, so no one suspected me."

"I kept out of the way of my husband all I could, and though he eyed me very sharply several times, he did not suspect me. I pretended to sleep most of the time, and yet I began to plot with some of the men. Then we captured the brig, and finding out what was to be done with you, I slipped on board and hid."

"I found I could trust two of the men; more I dared not risk; so I drugged some liquor last night, and Senor Monon and eight of the men drank it."

"They were stupefied, and I put irons on them, and bound them in their hammocks so that they are prisoners, while my two allies are in charge of the brig now bound to Boston, when you will go to your friends, and I will quit this world forever and bury myself within the walls of a convent to atone for the past, for knowingly remaining the wife of a man I knew to be a monster, and whose letter I have here, written to the old wrecker chief and sent by Senor Monon, to put me to death!"

"But let me not say more, for there is work to be done, and, as we are very short-handed, Senorita Lonsdale, and you are a good sailor, will you aid by a trick at the wheel now and then, while the Senorita Lurline will look after the cooking."

Without another word the strange woman turned and left the cabin, while Eve and Lurline wept for very joy at their deliverance from the power of the Ocean Ogre.

CONCLUSION.

The Spanish brig, under command of Marcelite, the wife of the cruel Ocean Ogre, was blessed with good weather, and was nearing Boston Harbor one morning, when three sail were sighted.

A short look showed that they were the Ship of Ill-Omen, the Belle of Blue Water, and the lateen-rig craft of the Ocean Ogre.

The Spanish craft at once lay to and signaled to the vessels, and in an hour's time the Ill-Omen, which led both the brig and Whirlwind in speed, ran alongside of the prize, for the sea was smooth, and Lonsdale sprung on board.

To his great joy he was met by his sister

and Lurline, and their story was soon told, and again told when Harold Vernon boarded from the brig.

Lonsdale had a story too, of how he had kept his vow and run down the Ocean Ogre, boarding the Whirlwind one night in his boats, during a calm, and killing the noted pirate with his own hand.

"It is but justice," said poor Marcelite, in a low tone, for she had stood in the companionway unseen, and heard all.

"And now, Eve," said Lonsdale, "war has begun between the Colonies and the king, and I, as an American, can never fight against my native land. I own the Ship of Ill-Omen, for I bought her, and Commodore Vernon owns the brig, and Harold is in command."

"By you I shall send my resignation as a king's officer to the admiral, and Harold and my other officers not having commissions will simply obey my orders."

"You may say to the admiral that for thirty days from to-day I will not raise another flag, nor will I run up the British ensign; but, as the Ocean Ogre's craft and the Spanish brig were taken under the king's colors, I send both vessels to him as prizes."

"And Eve, my sister, I wish you to glean for me all the news as to the movements of our people, by land and sea, and send a faithful messenger with a letter for me to Old Nat, the Hermit."

"When I receive it, I will best know how I can serve our native land."

"Tell dear old Branscombe that he and I can never be foes, though under different flags, and say to Captain Frank Fenton that if he wishes to capture the Ship of Ill-Omen he can find her after thirty days, whenever he wishes to seek for her."

Under cover of the darkness that night the Whirlwind and the Spanish brig were sent in and anchored under the guns of the fort, and Colonel Du Bose was signaled to come and take possession, the Ship of Ill-Omen and the Belle of Blue Water then sailing swiftly away.

The next day Admiral Fenton received from Eve Lonsdale, who went to his quarters with Commodore Vernon and Belle, the resignation of her brother as a king's officer, and Frank Fenton, who was present, burst out with:

"I told you so, sir! But I will one day capture your traitor brother, Miss Lonsdale, and as a traitor hang him!"

Poor Marcelite did as she had said, retired to a convent to end her days, and after the evacuation of Boston by the British, and its occupancy by Washington's army, the American vessels-of-war crowded into the port, and the most famous of them all was the Ship of Ill-Omen!

And during the bitter struggle for independence, there were a number of weddings in Boston, among which were Miss Belle Vernon to Captain Lonsdale, Miss Lola Valverde to Lieutenant Harold Vernon, and Miss Lurline Liston to Lieutenant English, all of the American Navy.

When the war at last came to an end, there was another marriage, and it was at Seaboard, the contracting parties being Eve Lonsdale and General Lord Albert Branscombe of the British Army, who had been true, through all, to his Yankee lady-love, as she had been to him.

As for Frank Fenton, he never kept his oath to hang Lonsdale; but when his rival captured the Saturn, he treated him with marked courtesy, which caused the British officer to remark:

"They call your frigate the Ship of Ill-Omen, Lonsdale, and she certainly has proven so—to your foes."

THE END.

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